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# Violence Against Women in Latin America and the Caribbean

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# Violence Against Women in Latin America and the Caribbean

# *Hemisphere*

A MAGAZINE OF THE AMERICAS

VOLUME 22 • SUMMER 2013 • [HTTP://LACC.FIU.EDU](http://LACC.FIU.EDU)



**Violence against Women in  
Latin America and the Caribbean**

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Cover Image: Jesús Abad Colorado.

# FROM THE EDITOR

Dear Hemisphere readers:

The Latin American and Caribbean Center is proud to place in your hands an exceptional issue of our annual publication. Gender-based violence is a scourge of societies worldwide and knows no barriers of class, ethnicity, race or religion along the long arc of history. Violence against women and girls is not cultural: It's a crime.

Yet, culture and history weigh heavily in relations between men and women. When addressing gender-based violence in Latin America and the Caribbean, we should never lose sight of the burden that culture and history have placed upon us when claiming the rights of women, physical security first and foremost. All the same, neither should we forget that the struggle for gender equality transcends any particular culture.

That women and men should be equal before the law, that all should have the opportunity to realize their dreams and talents – these are ideas that originated in the West but that today are increasingly if unevenly embraced across cultures worldwide. In certain quarters, it is fashionable to wave the flag of autochthonous values said to be more attuned with local mores, whether regarding women or the right to speak freely without fear of retribution. Even so, if given access to education, health care, jobs, the legal system, and the right to vote, women and their daughters are unlikely to settle only for the privacy of their homes. Bliss behind closed doors may be overrated, and hell created by a father or husband has too often raged within four walls without recourse for the victims.

Thankfully, things aren't what they used to be. For one, silence is losing out to women raising their voices.

In the last year, LACC has sponsored several events on gender-based violence. In partnership with FIU's Department of History and the Miami Consortium for Latin American and Caribbean Studies, we held an international conference on the topic on November 30, 2012. In this issue, Hemisphere publishes the presentations by Victor Uribe, Pilar Riaño-Alcalá, and Elizabeth Pleck, and an interview with Rita Laura Segato, an intellectual pioneer in the analysis of violence against women in Latin America.

On December 11-13, 2012, FIU's College of Law, School of International and Public Affairs, and LACC hosted the US Department of State's Caribbean Dialogue on Rule of Law and Gender-Based Violence. Participants came from all over the English-speaking Caribbean. The program included visits to Miami-Dade County courts that handle gender-based violence cases and facilities that support women and children in need.

On March 19, 2013, the 30th Annual Journalists & Editors Workshop on Latin America and the Caribbean organized by LACC and FIU's School of Journalism and Mass Communication addressed the challenges of covering domestic and sexual violence. Featured guest speakers included Teresa Rodríguez (Univision), Judith Torrea (investigative blogger and freelance journalist), and Mirta Rodríguez-Calderón (journalist and mass-communication expert).

This issue of Hemisphere focuses on violence against women in Latin America and the Caribbean. Women and girls are the primary victims of gender-based violence, but boys and men suffer as well. Men in positions of authority—priests and football coaches come to mind—have wrecked the lives of untold boys. Grown men—as the recent scandal of rapes in the US military show—can also be victims of sexual violence. That's a pending issue yet to be fully addressed.

Many thanks are in order. Aurora Morcillo (History) and Ana María Bidegain (Religious Studies) put together the November conference. Dean Raul Reis and his colleagues at the School of Journalism and Mass Communication supported the Journalists & Editors workshop. With grace and diligence, guest editor Victor Uribe put together this issue. Contributors did a magnificent job of shedding light on a painful subject. As usual, Liesl Picard pulled it all together seamlessly, or so it seemed. Alisa Newman always lives up to her well-deserved reputation as an excellent editor. ¡Millón de gracias!

Marifeli Pérez-Stable  
Interim Director 2012-2013  
Latin American and Caribbean Center  
Florida International University

# I N T R O D U C T I O N

*From 'domestic violence' to violence(s) against women in Latin America and the Caribbean. Histories, public policies, challenges and achievements.*

Historically, violence against women came to our attention mainly in the familial sphere, where it was first designated generically as “domestic violence.” Only later, not long ago as a matter of fact, was it recast as violence “against intimate partners,” a more precise and comprehensive expression. This form of violence has been a longstanding historical problem in virtually all societies of the world, Latin America and the Caribbean included. In this and other regions it took a long time for “domestic” violence to be moved out of the household and into the public and, finally, international arena. Initially, the problem was addressed through ecclesiastical or civil mediation and legislation; later, through criminal legislation; and, only recently, through international public health policies and human rights instruments. For a variety of reasons, each one of these mechanisms has been limited, hard to enforce, difficult to monitor, and slow to undergo adjustments. Similar to the gradual transformation of the terrains and means to address it, scientific understanding of the problem has taken a long time to mature. Violence against intimate partners was originally viewed as merely a police or judicial issue and, much later, found to be a complex interdisciplinary situation in which sociological, psychological and medical factors, among others, also play a role.

Along with the understanding that intimate partner violence is not just a private and police/judicial issue, feminist organizations campaigned to broaden the concern of state and international authorities so that, instead of restricting their attention to women affected by violence in the intimate sphere, they could turn their attention more widely to all forms of aggression against women. This is why academics and policy makers nowadays commonly address rape and femicide alongside battery. All of these conducts represent serious violations of a woman’s dignity, health and human rights.

This issue of Hemisphere traces part of the evolution in the understanding and treatment of violence against women, while offering a synopsis of the most recent data in 12 nations of Latin America and the Caribbean. Several of the contributions present some of the most critical challenges for academic and policy makers interested in this pressing problem. Contributors address a variety of questions, including: How and when did public attention toward violence between domestic partners move out of the domestic sphere and into the public and international arenas? How did it, if at all, turn into concern about violence against women more generally, whether in a domestic context or not? What are the current trends in violence against women in Latin America and the Caribbean? How do culture, customs, languages and perceptions of the body contribute to perpetuate or shape the impact of all of its forms? What are the best practices to address domestic violence and violence against women? Finally, this issue also provides bibliographical information and a list of valuable resources for both academics and victims alike. We hope it will draw the readers’ attention to a crucial issue and contribute to the ongoing debate over how to lessen its destructive impact on individuals and societies.

*Victor M. Uribe-Uran*

*Associate Professor, Department of History and College of Law  
Florida International University*

# From 'Domestic Violence' to Violence(s) against Women in Modern Mexico and Latin America\*

Victor M. Uribe-Uran  
Florida International University

In December 1993, the General Assembly of the United Nations issued a resolution stating that “violence against women is a manifestation of historically unequal power relations between men and women, which have led to domination over and discrimination against women by men and to the prevention of the full advancement of women.” Twelve years later, the United Nations Population Fund described gender-based violence as “perhaps the most widespread and socially tolerated of human rights violations.” These statements would have not been possible many years earlier and were the result of a complex process of cultural, political and legal change over many centuries. For such claims to be made, attention to violence against women had to move out of the domestic sphere into, first, the public realm of the nation-state, and then into the international arena.

This article briefly addresses the modern history, meaning and implications of this protracted transition in Mexico and some other Latin American societies. It will discuss how the implementation of effective sanctions and preemptive policies to contain violence against



*“Mexican Dresses,” by Frederick Catherwood, 1799-1854. In nineteenth-century Mexico, in spite of the enactment of “liberal” constitutions, civil and criminal codes, as well as growing secularization of the treatment of family relations and domestic disputes, in matters of domestic violence there was more continuity than change relative to colonial times.*

women evolved from a local police or judicial concern into a major international public health and human rights issue. It also traces the shift from a focus on physical violence to one targeting wider forms of abuse and, more important, examines the evolution from an exclusive academic and policy focus on “domestic violence” to a larger concern with violence against women more generally, whether or not in a domestic context. Finally,

the discussion briefly takes note of some current trends in violence against women in Latin America, a problem that continues to be chronic and widespread.

## **From domestic to public and international**

Historically, violence against women originally came to social attention mainly in the familial sphere. However, in colonial times this type of aggression did not have

“Worldwide, an estimated one in five women will be a victim of rape or attempted rape in her lifetime. One in three will have been beaten, coerced into sex or otherwise abused, usually by a family member or an acquaintance. More often than not, the perpetrators go unpunished. Each year, hundreds of thousands of women and children are trafficked and enslaved, millions more are subjected to harmful practices. Violence kills and disables as many women between the ages of 15 and 44 as cancer. And its toll on women’s health surpasses that of traffic accidents and malaria combined.”

UNFPA, *State of World Population*, 2005. Chapter 7 “Gender-based Violence: A Price Too High.”

a separate status, but was just part of the larger legal category of physical injury (“*lesiones*”). Eventually, to differentiate it from aggression occurring in other contexts, after independence from Spain it came to be designated as “domestic violence,” a widespread situation impacting all sorts of households.

In the Spanish American world, from the early nineteenth century and all the way through to the present, women have been regularly subjected to physical, psychological and sexual abuse by their intimate partners. In the past and today, such abuse has involved disputes over autonomy, obedience, deference, sex, money, domestic chores, children, relatives, drinking and, in general, clashes between intimate partners over the understanding of their reciprocal rights and duties. The triggering factors have typically included alleged disobedience on the part of women, their response to verbal attacks by partners, failure to prepare and serve meals correctly or on time, alleged neglect of household or childcare duties, impertinent questions about money or relations with other women, unjustified absence from the domestic space, refusal to have sexual intercourse, or suspected infidelity. All of these elements have operated in a misogynist and patriarchal cultural, social and institutional context in which men concentrate economic and sexual power, social status and political authority in both public and private spaces, deriving sexual, economic, social, political and cultural benefits as a result. A rapid overview

of the situation during various historical sub-periods is useful for understanding the phenomenon.

### Liberal patriarchy

Mexico provides valuable historical evidence of the situation during the liberal nineteenth century, a time during which this and other regions in Latin America continued to be predominantly agrarian and livestock-based economies, with some mining, internal trade and very limited industry. Overall, the mostly qualitative information available leads to the conclusion that, in spite of the enactment of “liberal” constitutions, civil and criminal codes, as well as growing secularization of the treatment of family relations and domestic disputes, in matters of domestic violence there was more continuity than change relative to colonial times. Domestic violence continued to be a common feature of everyday family life, was perceived as an entirely private matter, and elicited a rather mild response from justice officials or ecclesiastical authorities. Husbands continued to exert *patria potestad* and *potestad marital* rights, including the right to reprehend disobedient wives and mete out “moderate” punishment (whatever this meant), and they continued to excuse themselves by citing female insolence, attacks against their honor, alleged infidelity, or simply uncontrollable rage, passion or confusion, all regarded under law as extenuating circumstances. A few examples illustrate these attitudes.

Historical evidence exists that

during the 1830s, in portions of Northern Mexico such as Laredo and Matamoros, some Catholic clergymen were in favor of separating married couples in cases of pervasive domestic violence. When some of these regions, including Texas, were incorporated into the United States in the late 1840s, women seem to have found it much easier to have violent husbands punished. In a rich study relying on more than 500 judicial cases from the 1850s to the 1890s, including 292 incidents of divorce, the majority of cases (more than 50%) involved the middle classes, a minority the wealthy, and an intermediate figure – about one-quarter – the poor. Abusive husbands were the main reason wives sought divorce during these four decades. For the entire century, this complaint accounted for about two-thirds of petitions. Husbands alleged abuses by their wives in less than 10% of cases.

Semantic and rhetorical debates persisted in Mexico in the second half of the nineteenth century over what constituted abuse and what was just acceptable “correction” of insubordinate wives. Husbands kept on battering their wives and claimed the authority to reprehend allegedly insolent, disobedient and irresponsible behavior. An important change in most regions of Mexico during the 1850s, however, was the secularization of divorce proceedings. Instead of ecclesiastical tribunals, civil judges were charged with hearing divorce cases. In the portions of Mexico annexed to the United States in the late 1840s,

\* This article draws on a larger comparative study. For full citations and additional evidence on other regions see Victor M. Uribe-Uran, “Physical Aggression Against Wives and the Law in Spanish America, 1780s-2000s,” in Ricardo Salvatore, Pieter Spierenburg and Eric Johnson eds., *Murder and Violence in Modern Latin America* (London: Blackwell-Wiley, forthcoming).

women experienced this change a decade earlier, when American civil officials began hearing divorce cases and resolving domestic disputes. By mid-century, therefore, the mores and beliefs of Catholic priests ceased to be the driving force in resolving battery and domestic disputes, with secular magistrates deciding how to resolve such cases.

More than a decade later, in the 1870s, divorce petitions in Mexico soared suddenly. Divorce suits jumped from an average of 60 annually to almost twice that number, a total of 104. Although this could be a function of irregular records, the increment has been attributed to the enactment of new legal reforms, including the July 23, 1859 law of civil marriage and the pro-divorce civil code introduced in 1866 under Emperor Maximilian. In 1871, after Maximilian had been deposed, a new code prohibited civil divorce, forcing spouses once more into conciliation. Still, although it did not necessarily bring greater equality for women, liberalism did increase the criminalization of domestic violence. In places like the rural pueblo of Namiquipa, Chihuahua, men accused of domestic violence were arrested and sentenced to 8 to 30 days in the local jail. Not a few were recidivists, however, and persisted in asserting their right to “correct” their wives. The judicial authorities also continued to favor women who showed “subordination to domestic patriarchy.”

The enactment of republican constitutions, modern civil and criminal codes, and some pro-divorce and secularizing legislation did not seem to have a significant effect on the way civil and



*Busts of the Mirabal sisters in the village of Salcedo, 150 km north of Santo Domingo in the Dominican Republic. The Mirabal sisters were political activists who were assassinated on November 25, 1960 during the Trujillo dictatorship. In 1997, the General Assembly of the United Nations passed a formal resolution recognizing that date as the International Day to Eliminate Violence Against Women.*

ecclesiastical authorities approached the problem of intimate partner violence. Battered women continued to face major difficulties when seeking redress, not only because of the persistence of deeply entrenched cultural values and social practices but also because the law left open various avenues for husbands to justify their conduct. Even when physical, psychological or sexual harm resulted to one of the parties, the authorities maintained the perception that family relations were a fundamentally private matter.

### **Modernized patriarchy**

In the last quarter of the nineteenth century, many Latin American nations experienced major economic and social transformation as a result of the boom in agrarian and mining exports. Export growth led to industrialization, mostly in the form of food processing plants, breweries, textile mills and railroad expansion. Accompanying this was the growth of cities and population in general, a growth sometimes driven by internal

migration or massive foreign immigration. Material progress and demographic growth, as could be expected, brought about changes in the composition and dynamics of households, but unfortunately, these do not appear to have included a reduction in the incidence of domestic violence. In some places more than others, however, patriarchy was ‘modernized’ and women were given additional legal tools to fight against it.

In Mexico, as a detailed local study demonstrates, women continued to experience a high incidence of domestic abuse and other forms of violence during the long early twentieth century, on the eve of the Mexican Revolution. In the rural peasant district of Tenango, in central Mexico, women do not appear to have committed any violent crimes against men and seem to have been responsible for just a handful of other types of criminal conduct (theft, adultery, etc.) during the period 1880-1910. At the same time, they were the regular victims of various forms

of violence at the hands of men, including both individual and collective rape, battery and deadly attacks. Of a sample of 138 cases of physical violence in the region over a 30-year period, husbands or intimate partners of the victims committed 80%. Three-quarters of all cases of male violence against women involved aggression against intimate female partners by formal or common-law husbands who accused them of failing to prepare meals on time or serve them politely, leaving the house without permission, or disobeying their orders. Tenango's men also used violence when their intimate partners complained about their affairs with other women or their drinking. The most severe form of violence appears to have occurred when local women were accused of infidelity. Suspected adulteresses were often killed, their corpses skewered with a stick (*empalar*) and left along a public road as a warning to other women of the consequences of such behavior.

It was not just in rural Mexico that domestic violence continued to haunt women. Recent research demonstrates the "systemic and systematic" nature of such violence throughout the entire country, although, unless it led to death, bloodshed or excessive publicity, both the press and the judicial system minimized its seriousness. Domestic violence against women was not only widespread and neglected by authorities and the media, but also was considerably underreported. Public opinion considered it a normal aspect of domestic life and, with a large part of the problem remaining in the private sphere, judicial activity did not reflect its true

magnitude. The available statistics are therefore defective, but they are enough to indicate that women rather than men denounced the majority of cases (80% of a sample of 113 cases of injuries and homicides committed between 1900 and 1930).

The criminal legislation in place at the time, the Code of 1871, afforded men several valid excuses or extenuating circumstances. The main excuse was the defense of one's honor. For instance, husbands who found their wives committing adultery would receive one-sixth of the regular sentence for battery and a shorter sentence for homicide. There would be no punishment at all for battery if it was performed in "the exercise of the right to punish the victim, even if the correction is excessive." Detailed research on "crimes of passion" in Guanajuato and Querétaro has found that consideration of men's honor and "justifiable" jealousy and rage meant that spousal murder was punished rather lightly, with death sentences commuted for jail terms (which were further reduced upon completion of one-quarter of the penalty). Punishment was also waived in cases of drunkenness, a relatively common circumstance among abusive husbands. Women who committed similar crimes were censored and, with a few notable exceptions motivated by a desire to protect female honor, condemned. They could not even press charges against adulterous husbands unless the adultery was committed in the couple's home, caused scandal or involved a steady concubine. In other words, material progress and the claim to "modernity" did not significantly change the way domestic violence was approached in Mexico.

Even after the enactment of revolutionary leader Venustiano Carranza's 1914 decree legalizing divorce, the pro-divorce provisions of the February 1917 Constitution, and the fairly egalitarian Law of Family Relations (April 9, 1917), double sexual standards and patriarchal practices continued in Mexico. To be sure, modernized *patria potestad* was now shared by husband and wife, women were given the right to administer property and enter into contracts without their husbands' authorization, divorce by mutual consent became possible, adultery became illegal irrespective of gender, and, as long as it rendered marital life "impossible," battery was also a gender-neutral cause for divorce (art. 76, no. vii). However, women needed their husbands' permission to work outside the home and remained responsible for household chores (*asuntos domésticos*). Furthermore, whereas female adultery was "always" a cause for divorce, the same was true of male adultery only when it took place in the family home or was combined with concubinage, public scandal, insult or ill treatment of the wife, either by the husband or his lover (art. 77). Finally, divorced men were allowed to marry much sooner than divorced women, who had to wait 300 days after the dissolution of their first marriage (art. 140). Not even the Mexican Revolution, therefore, truly put an end to paternalistic rule.

Even though, for the sake of brevity, this essay has not dealt with the case of Brazil, it is impossible to neglect the significance of events in that nation during the period under consideration. Public sentiment

against the law's tolerance for domestic violence, in particular the large number of legally acceptable wife killings, reached a peak in the early twentieth century. The result was the beginning of a collective "social hygiene" campaign sparked by middle-class female writers who published angry pieces demanding change. In early 1925, a group of male professionals followed suit by founding the Brazilian Council on Social Hygiene, with the goal of ending the impunity and complacency of men accused of crimes of passion. "In courtrooms, public lecture halls, legal journals, books, professional organizations, and the popular press," one study notes, they fought against legal protections for wife killers and managed to bring about the revision of the Penal Code. Starting in 1940, criminal legislation ceased to accept emotion or passion as a justification for killing one's spouse. Prior to this time, as was the case elsewhere in Latin America, Brazilian women had little protection against violent outbursts from their husbands.

The long early twentieth century witnessed some important changes in the regulation of patriarchy, marriage and domestic violence. In addition to the further secularization of family relations, including the widening of civil marriage rights and full divorce in at least some countries in the region, gender-neutral language found its way into some criminal codes, most notably in Argentina (1886) and Puerto Rico (1902). These codes outlawed male adultery for the first time in each country's history. As in Brazil a few decades later, these statutes also made it illegal for husbands to kill

their wives. They did not bring an end to patriarchy – not only because patriarchal customs trumped formal legal changes but also because, under civil legislation, men continued to enjoy various legal powers over women – but they did modernize it by providing women with some additional tools to defend their rights and fight back.

Even though the period from the 1940s to the 1970s witnessed the rise of industrialization in the bigger countries of Latin America and the increasing participation of women in the labor market, legal treatment of domestic violence did not change significantly. Not until the 1980s did truly dramatic transformations take place at last.

#### **Globalized patriarchy**

The last three decades have been a period of further demographic change, growth and urbanization, and political and economic transformation. They have also been a time of considerable legal reform, perhaps the deepest to date, in matters of domestic abuse at both the national and international levels. Latin American societies experienced watershed historical changes in this period. As a result of the "debt crisis" of the 1980s, most of the region's economies, to a greater or lesser extent, introduced wide-ranging trade reforms, deregulation of labor markets, and the large-scale privatization of utilities, banks, energy production and supply, transportation, and a number of other formerly state-owned sectors. This led to increasing "globalization" and deindustrialization of economies throughout the subcontinent. Until recently, however, political systems experienced an uncontrollable

expansion of democratic government, intense feminist organizing, and a number of progressive constitutional and legal reforms. Some of these touched on family relations, gender equality and women's rights. The most significant legal reforms took place in the international arena in response to long simmering pressures from feminist movements, among others. One could even argue that concerns over human rights and, later, public health led to a true globalization of policies toward patriarchy.

Household diversity is a constant in Latin America, where contractually married and informal unions, nuclear and extended families, two-parent and single-parent households are common. There has been a pronounced trend, however, toward the decline of the patriarchal household and a growth in female-headed households. Experts have attributed this to migration patterns, socio-legal changes in marriage and divorce, and economic restructuring. Concomitantly, higher female enrollment in secondary education has created greater employment opportunities for women and growing participation in the national labor force. Yet, gender inequality persists, in part because women who face more work at home and in their communities have less freedom for extra-domestic pursuits than their male counterparts, and because of the improvements that still need to be made in maternal and child health. Data on domestic violence reflect these problems, as is evident in the following comparative statistics on intimate partner violence in various Latin American and Caribbean nations in the late 1990s.

As can be observed from the table on the next page, domestic violence continued to be pervasive in several Spanish American nations during the 1990s, without seeming to have declined significantly, if at all, from the 1940s to 1980s. In regional studies conducted in 1996 in Guadalajara and Monterrey, listed in the table, between 17% to 20% of the women in two large samples (650 and 1064 women, respectively), all of whom were 15 years of age or older, had experienced domestic violence at some time in their lives. Mexico's first national survey of domestic violence, conducted in 2003 (*Encuesta Nacional Sobre Violencia Contra las Mujeres*, ENVIM), indicated even higher proportions: It established that two out of every 10 women 15 years of age or older who used various public health services had suffered violence at the hand of their intimate partners during the previous year, and four out of every 10 had experienced some kind of violence from people close to them. That same year another national survey, the *Encuesta Nacional de Dinámica en las Relaciones de los Hogares* (ENDIREH), showed that 47% of all women surveyed had suffered emotional, economic, physical or sexual violence by their intimate partners.

A 2006 comprehensive essay on domestic violence in Mexico set a series of innovative trends that characterize the current field of study in this area. Significant quantitative and qualitative scientific research on domestic abuse in Mexico now exists in a variety of fields, including anthropology, history, epidemiology, law, medicine,

nursing, psychology and sociology. At least some of this research originates in specialized academic groups, think tanks and organizations that exclusively address domestic abuse. These groups are interested not only in the general phenomenon but also in specialized aspects, such as impact on reproductive and mental health, incidence during pregnancy, connection with drug and alcohol consumption, relationship to children's weight and emotional development, etc.

Systematic research conducted over the past 15 years at the local, regional and national levels, mostly in urban centers, has concluded that domestic battery is a major human rights and public health problem at the national level. Its greatest impact is on women from lower socioeconomic groups, while it tends to be underreported among the dominant social strata. Due to the widespread and intense nature of the problem and its damaging impact, local and national surveys are now conducted about this issue on a more or less regular basis. Information and victim assistance centers, as well as some specialized public facilities and NGOs, are taking a professional approach to the problem. By early 2009, Amnesty International estimated that Mexico had around 60 public and private shelters to protect female victims of gender violence – still an insufficient number, but an improvement.

All of the above would have been unthinkable just several decades ago. Domestic violence is unquestionably a public phenomenon and a source of concern for ample sectors of society interested in protecting human rights and public health in Mexico, which

may be the Latin American country where the clearest understanding of the issue exists. In April 1996, the Mexico City government passed the Law of Attention to and Prevention of Intra-familial Violence, the country's first legislation of this type. In December 1997, related reforms were introduced to the country's civil, civil procedural, criminal and criminal procedural codes. In early 2000, Mexico issued an official national statute (Official Mexican Norm or ONM-190-SSA-1999) requiring health services to report cases of domestic violence to the judicial authorities. Finally, as a culmination of 30 years of feminist struggle, in December 2006 the Mexican legislature passed the first comprehensive legislation to combat gender violence in the country, the *Ley General de Acceso a Una Vida Libre de Violencia*. The law created, among other things, a national system to prevent violence against women and girls and to assist and protect victims.

Similar trends can be observed in other Latin American countries. Several enacted anti-domestic violence laws in the 1990s, followed by comprehensive laws concerning violence against women and girls at the start of the new century. Virtually every country in Latin America, however, has continued to record alarming levels of domestic violence in recent decades. Detailed statistics now available in several countries, including Mexico, Colombia, Nicaragua, Chile, Peru and Puerto Rico, document this situation more scientifically than ever before. Across the region, governments have instituted watershed legal reforms, including protective measures for battered females, and a host of state

and civil society mechanisms for victims to receive information and assistance. The concluding portion of this essay examines the reasons behind these changes.

### The blessings of globalization

The historical information available about intimate partner violence is variegated and hard to compare

over the long term. The earliest such information can be gleaned from a combination of individual criminal cases or patchy divorce data; the most recent, from comprehensive local, regional and national surveys and quantitative studies based on scientific polling and systematic new measurement methods developed since the late 1970s. Nevertheless,

when combined for the sake of obtaining a tentative aggregate historical picture, the diverse data available leave little doubt that, over the last 200-odd years, domestic violence has been widespread and pervasive in Spanish America. Even during periods when more aggressive legal action began to be deployed, it appears to have remained a constant.

## PHYSICAL ASSAULT ON WOMEN BY AN INTIMATE MALE PARTNER, SELECTED POPULATION-BASED STUDIES, 1982-1999

Country or area	Year of study	Coverage	Sample			Proportion of women physically assaulted by a partner (%)		
			Size	Study population	Age (years)	During the previous 12 months	In current relationship	Ever
<b>Latin America and the Caribbean</b>								
Antigua	1990	National	97	I	29-45			30 <sup>d</sup>
Barbados	1990	National	264	I	20-45			30 <sup>ce</sup>
Bolivia	1998	Three districts	289	I	≥20	17 <sup>c</sup>		
Chile	1993	Santiago Province	1000	II	22-55		26/11 <sup>f</sup>	
	1997	Santiago	310	II	15-49	23		
Colombia	1995	National	6097	II	15-49		19	
Mexico	1996	Guadalajara	650	III	≥15			27
		Monterrey	1064	III	≥15			17
Nicaragua	1995	León	360	III	15-49	27/20 <sup>f</sup>		52/37 <sup>f</sup>
	1997	Managua	378	III	15-49	33/28		69
	1998	National	8507	III	15-49	12/8 <sup>f</sup>		28/21 <sup>f</sup>
Paraguay	1995-1996	National, except Chaco region	5940	III	15-49			10
Peru	1997	Metro Lima (middle-income and low-income)	359	II	17-55	31		
Puerto Rico	1995-1996	National	4755	III	15-49			13 <sup>g</sup>
Uruguay	1997	Two Regions	545	II <sup>h</sup>	22-55	10 <sup>e</sup>		

<sup>a</sup> Study population: I = all women; II = currently married/partnered women; III = ever-married/partnered women; IV = married men reporting on own use of violence against spouse; V = women with a pregnancy outcome; VI = married women - half with pregnancy outcome, half without.

<sup>b</sup> In past 3 months.

<sup>c</sup> Sample group included women who had never been in a relationship and therefore were not at risk of partner violence.

<sup>d</sup> Although sample includes all women, rate of abuse is shown of ever-married/partnered women (number not given).

<sup>e</sup> Physical or sexual assault

<sup>f</sup> Any physical abuse/severe physical abuse only.

<sup>g</sup> Rate of partner abuse among ever-married/partnered women recalculated from author's data.

<sup>h</sup> Non-random sampling techniques used.

<sup>i</sup> Includes assault by others.

<sup>j</sup> Perpetrator could be a family member or close friend.

Part of a larger table presented in L.L. Heise and C. Garcia-Moreno, "Violence by Intimate Partners," in Etienne G. Krug et al. eds., *World Report on Violence and Health* (WHO: Geneva, 2001), 90, and originally taken from the work by L.L. Heise, M. Ellsberg and M. Gottemoeller, *Ending Violence Against Women* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University School of Public Health-Center for Communications Programs, 1999).

## Latin American countries to enact comprehensive laws against violence within the family



Rather than serving as a deterrent, corrective and punitive legal measures have been historically insufficient in stemming the problem of domestic violence. Legal changes have been piecemeal, far between, and relatively ineffective in the face of longstanding patriarchal structures. Starting in the middle to late nineteenth century (in some cases, the early twentieth century), the most notable reforms historically included, first, a series of laws that introduced civil marriage, made divorce more widely available, and charged local secular authorities, rather than the Catholic Church, with handling domestic conflicts. Although generally restricted to “habitual,” “cruel,” “atrocious” or “publicly scandalous” mistreatment, these laws set limits on wives’ obligation to stay in abusive marriages and afforded women avenues to leave violent partners. From early on, some provisions existed to shelter abused wives by putting them into custody or safekeeping (“*depósito*”), although, as in late nineteenth-century Argentina, men could and did use this system to their advantage. Even the legal recourses resulting from liberal or modernized versions of patriarchy, which took domestic violence from the private into the public arena in the hope that redress would be found there, were no match for such a longstanding, socially rooted and culturally entrenched practice inherent to patriarchy itself. Intimate partner violence, viewed as part of

“sporadic” and “moderate” correction under “*potestad marital*,” had been a natural component of married life from time immemorial, and the mandatory “conciliation” of disputes served to prolong it. Liberal civil laws on marriage and divorce, as well as classical and positivist criminal codes, were full of loopholes and provided male batterers or wife killers with a range of excuses to avoid harsh sentences (or any prosecution at all!). The campaigns against wife killing in Mexico or Brazil make it clear that extreme gender violence remained extensive well into the mid-twentieth century. Efforts to contain femicide in contemporary Chile or Colombia are another reminder that we are far from breaking away from this past.

Nevertheless, there has been a dramatic increase in the amount of attention paid to domestic violence by legal, human rights and public health activists in virtually every nation of Latin America over the last three decades. It has been accompanied by the establishment of new gender-sensitive and women-focused public institutions, protective policies, awareness campaigns, service guidelines and action plans (“*rutas críticas*”). Puerto Rico was the first Latin American country to enact comprehensive laws against violence within the family, in 1989, followed by Trinidad and Tobago (1991), Argentina (1994), Bolivia (1995), Chile (1994), Colombia (1996), Costa Rica (1996), Ecuador (1995), El Salvador (1996), Guatemala

(1996), Honduras (1997), Mexico (1996), Nicaragua (1996), Panama (1995), Peru (1993, 1997), and Venezuela (1998). Most recently, Mexico (2006) and Colombia (2008) approved more ambitious laws concerning gender violence in general. Other countries are likely to follow suit.

Is this just a remarkable coincidence? Was it the product of local efforts by well-intentioned legislators or energized national feminist movements acting in striking coordination with one another? I would argue that developments in international law, as civilizing a force as any ever experienced before, provided the required incentives and momentum. At least after the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) entered into force in 1981, followed by the 1993 World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna, the world community began framing these behaviors as discriminatory and a major human rights violation. In the last decade, the World Health Organization also elevated physical, psychological and sexual violence against women to the category of a grave public health problem.

This trend can be traced back to 1962, when the women’s movements of Latin America and the Caribbean selected November 25 as the day to denounce violence against women. On that date two years earlier,

1996

Colombia,  
Costa Rica,  
El Salvador,  
Guatemala,  
Nicaragua

1997

Honduras,  
Peru  
(Reform)

1998

Venezuela

2006

Mexico  
(Reform)

2008

Colombia  
(Reform)

three activists in the Dominican Republic (the Mirabal sisters: Patricia Mercedes, Minerva Argentina and María Teresa) had been killed by the Trujillo dictatorship. Three and a half decades later, in 1997, the General Assembly of the United Nations passed a formal resolution recognizing that same day as the International Day to Eliminate Violence Against Women. Various forms of gender violence, including intimate partner violence, were unquestionably central to explaining this landmark. During the intervening period, intimate partner and other modalities of gender violence had become a matter of increasing concern for the women's movement, the international community and individual states in the region and elsewhere. From 1975 to 1985, the United Nations Decade for Women, numerous feminist conferences, encounters and campaigns were organized around the world. Research and writing on gender increased dramatically, along with information about the condition of women and families. As we have seen, by 1997 many Latin American countries had compiled statistics and evidence of the human rights and public health significance of intimate partner violence. A host of international actions and policies on this issue were implemented. Much as in the case of protective international policies in favor of ethnic minorities, numerous countries gradually endorsed these

international rules, which spurred the passage of copycat legislation in country after country.

The international feminist movement gained strength thanks to a series of world women's conferences, starting with the one in Mexico in 1975 to mark the start of the UN Decade for Women. This conference led to the establishment of the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW) and the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), designed to provide the institutional framework for research, training and operational activities in the area of women and development. Follow-up conferences were held in Copenhagen (1980), Nairobi (1985) and Beijing (1995), and there is now pressure for a fifth world conference in the near future. All of these conferences served to push forward "global" efforts to promote the advancement of women and opened a worldwide dialogue on gender equality. The strategic objectives and platforms they developed culminated in a World Plan of Action that addresses a variety of gender equality fronts targeting governments, international organizations, communities and individuals. An important component of the platforms and the World Plan is the issue of gender violence, starting with intimate partner violence, which has rightly come to be understood as a global problem.

By 1992, all of Latin America and the Caribbean had ratified CEDAW. Then came the Organization of American States' Inter-American Convention to Prevent, Punish and Eradicate Violence against Women (also called the Convention of Belém do Pará) in June 1994. By 1998, almost all countries in the region had ratified this multilateral treaty, and numerous signatory nations passed their own national laws on intimate partner violence. At no other time in the history of Latin America had this issue been considered a human rights or public health problem of global dimensions worth addressing through comprehensive legislation, specialized state and civil society institutions, and mass campaigns. It goes without saying that feminist mobilization through the years was indispensable in making possible many of these developments, although a discussion of this history is beyond the scope of this essay.

The passage of patriarchy from private to global regulation is a truly structural transition and therefore likely to have a greater impact on patterns of gender relations than liberal and modernized versions had in the past. But patriarchy and the violence associated with it have been structural (cultural, social, economic, political) conditions of world societies for centuries. The ongoing transition is likely to be protracted and face many obstacles along the way. □

# An Academic's Search for Answers to Violence against Women: An Interview with Professor Rita Laura Segato\*

Victor M. Uribe-Uran  
Florida International University



Rita Laura Segato



Brasília's Plano Piloto (the original planned city) is so dazzling: translucent in its urban design, so well policed, so well disciplined, so "clean." But it was one of the most violent cities for gender aggressions.

*You are a social anthropologist and your early research was on religious rituals. Can you please tell us about the academic path that took you from that early line of work to search for an understanding of the history of gender and gender violence?*

This story, which is truly the story of my life, my struggle, and my thought, is divided into three phases: First, when I entered the sphere of gender in my study of Afro-Brazilian religion; second, when I became drawn to the study of various modalities of urban violence, especially street violence in Brasília,

a large part of it involving rape, and homicidal violence against women in Ciudad Juárez, Mexico; and finally, most recently, in my study of violence facing indigenous women in Brazil. Through these various phases I became increasingly engaged in the effort to historicize gender. Although I always acknowledged the cultural nature of gender, my early studies were somewhat more structural and ahistorical. More recently I have become more and more aware and convinced of the need to approach gender violence in a radically historical manner, avoiding culturalism.

*Please tell us a little more about the first of these phases.*

In Afro-Brazilian religion, I encountered a quite equalitarian community where women are extremely strong – or were, because this is changing now. As Ruth Landes put it in her major book *The City of Women*, published back in the 1940s, black women in Brazil were queens of their own world. In that community I found an androgynous setting for gender: what we would call, using Western categories, bisexuality. By this I mean people transiting from one sexual orientation to

\*Anthropologist Rita Laura Segato teaches at the University of Brasília and is a high-ranking researcher of the Brazilian System of Science and Technology.

the other without the problems of self-identification the modern West imposes on us. I saw a community that was completely different in the way it constructed the architecture of gender and in the layers of its gender composition, organization, personality, sexual orientation, sexual practices, and social and religious roles. All the layers were separated and were not biologically determined, as was the case in my own world.

*How about your entry into the field of urban violence?*

After my study among Afro-Brazilians came my entry into the world of violence. From that moment on, everything I did was at the request of interested situated others, *an Anthropology on Request*, we could say. I mean to say that I never sought or wanted to study sexual violence in Brasília; I never wanted to go to Ciudad Juárez; I never wanted to see this horrific dimension of social relations. Despite the history of slavery and everything linked to it, my first research topic was a rather happy one dealing with a social arrangement in which women were powerful. This second topic was traumatic. It followed a request from my own university and the chief of security of the city of Brasília. He requested from the President of the University of Brasília research that could explain to him why Brasília was such a violent city in terms of gender; specifically, why the rate of street rape was so high in comparison to other, much larger urban environments, such as São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro. This was

perplexing because Brasília's Plano Piloto (the original planned city) is so dazzling: translucent in its urban design, so well policed, so well disciplined, so "clean." But it was one of the most violent cities for gender aggressions, judging from the evidence of complaints filed with the police.

With a team of students and colleagues, I was in charge of interviewing imprisoned men convicted for the crime of rape. As the head of the police force had asked for the research, we had a perfect opportunity to interview rapists locked in jail, alone for many hours at a time, and without any guard inside the room listening to the conversation. That research was the basis for my book *Las estructuras elementales de la violencia* (The Elementary Structures of Violence), published in Buenos Aires in 2003. In that book I accept part of the feminist thesis on violence, which is that rape is not a personal act committed by individuals with a vocation for crime. This represents a critique of the juridical-medical thesis of the abnormality or exceptionality of rape. I approached rape as a social crime and as a male mandate. I added a second element to the classical feminist thesis as it appears, for example, in Susan Brownmiller's great book *Against Our Will*: From the testimonies of the convicted men, I concluded that the axis relating the violent man, the aggressor, to the victim, considered by feminists as the central structure in gender aggression – the "hatred axis," as it could be called – was neither the only component in the structure of

aggression or, indeed, the main one. In fact, when people committed sexual aggression, two axes were at work. One was the axis linking the aggressor to the victim; the other, with a major role in triggering the aggression, was the axis linking the aggressor to his friends and equals – his peers or fellow men.

There was a sort of brotherhood, a male corporation, as a permanent shadow interlocutor behind the narratives of the interviewed. They hinted in various forms at its existence and relevance in launching the aggression. In the mental landscape of the aggressor, he was always in the company of this group of peers, his fraternity. It was possible to hear him responding, in a subtext, to the mandate to be a man, to reconstitute himself as a man, coming from these shadow interlocutors, his very relevant group of peers. To be a man, in the sense I define this mandate, which is proving to the world – in the form of the brotherhood of his relevant fellows – his ability to exhibit and reproduce a "package" of six potencies amounting to virility: sexual, aggressive, economic, political, intellectual and moral potency. These qualities are entangled and intertwined and can, indeed, substitute for each other.

In the long history of humanity, this mandate over men seems to have been extremely strong. Men have their own subjectivity, as persons compromised and burdened by the social mandate of masculinity. This is a big difference between men and women: Male subjectivity is affected by, or vulnerable to, the mandate of

virility as the quality guaranteed by the display of the package of potencies referred to above. Males as subjects, as persons, see themselves and are represented as dependent on the mandate to be virile, masculine. From this perspective, rape was understood, or “heard” in the interviews, as a kind of test of virility performed for the aggressor’s observant peers to witness, whether present – as in gangs – or absent – in the form of shadow interlocutors, as I called them. The gift or “tribute” being transferred or yielded from the victim to the aggressor was power itself. The aggressor exacted this token of power from the victim, vital for nourishing his own masculinity. The word “rape” has the same etymology as *rapiña*, looting or predatory behavior in Spanish, and *rapaz*, young man in Portuguese.

*What was the impact of this research?*

The book was widely read in Latin America. However, after publishing it, I realized that my approach was ahistorical. I said in the book that men, to be men, had to exact a tribute from women, and this tribute from women came in the form of sexual or other types of subordination, all of which construct masculinity. I used lots of examples to illustrate the universality of an imaginary of rape. There is no society in the whole world that does not know rape. There are societies with a very low incidence, and others with a very high incidence. To be sure, rape has a very different meaning in tribal societies than in modern societies. In tribal

societies it may be a way of applying a norm or punishment. In our world, rape is a crime. But all societies know about that kind of violent intervention in the feminized body.

The point is that we have some puzzling universalities in the realm of gender and my book discusses these. I realized, though, that I was not able to really historicize gender as much as I would have liked. Gender is historical, but the universality of violence made me turn it into a rather more structural than historical reality. I don’t renounce the structuralist approach to gender, but now I finally understood how the coloniality introduces a twist, a turning point in the previous gender structure. That is the topic of a recent article I wrote, drawing on ten years of work with indigenous women in Brazil.

*How did you end up moving from that work to research on the homicides of women in Ciudad Juárez?*

I crossed paths with the women of Ciudad Juárez thanks to an encounter with Judge Baltazar Garzón in 2003, the year in which *Las estructuras* was published. He was, at that time, in charge of the Summer Course on Human Rights at the Universidad Complutense at El Escorial, in Spain, and he dedicated the 2003 course to the issue of violence against women. As he knew my book and had heard me speaking in Austin and Buenos Aires the previous year, he invited me to give the opening day lecture at El Escorial. There, I met two groups of women activists for Ciudad Juárez. Among

them was the legendary Chicana filmmaker Lourdes Portillo, from San Francisco, who had made the first documentary on the Mothers of Plaza de Mayo in Argentina and an extraordinary, very sensitive documentary about Ciudad Juárez called *Señorita extraviada*. She was in Spain with her biographer, Rosa-Linda Fregoso. I also met members of the organization Nuestras Hijas de Regreso a Casa (May Our Daughters Return Home) and EPIKEIA, a Mexico City-based group. After hearing some testimonies, I realized that my model emphasizing the axis of partnership among men for understanding rape could shed light on the mafia structure of Ciudad Juárez. This research resulted in a short book called *La escritura en el cuerpo de las mujeres asesinadas en Ciudad Juárez*. It has already been translated into German, Italian, Portuguese and English (in article form as “Territory, Sovereignty, and the Crimes of the Second State: The Writing on the Body of Murdered Women,” published by Rosa-Linda Fregoso and Cynthia Bejarano in their edited volume *Terrorizing Women*). I extended to this modality of gender violence my understanding of rape as expressive violence, convinced that it was never meant to be instrumental violence. There are about 42 hypotheses about what is happening in Ciudad Juárez, in that laboratory of gender cruelty. Many refer to the instrumental nature of such violence, but I disagree with this line of thinking.

I claimed that those crimes are expressive of jurisdiction. By that I mean they express sovereignty over a territory. They express



People who lost female relatives because of crime march in Ciudad Juárez, Mexico, on International Women's Day (March 8, 2013).

discretionality and sovereignty over a territorial jurisdiction. Whoever committed the crimes was saying: “We own this territory. Don’t try to intervene because this place is ours; it belongs to us.”

Some of the hypotheses about the events in Ciudad Juárez are instrumental. They refer to cyber pornography, traffic in human organs, and so forth. My book presents a critique of mono-causality, which has dominated the common sense explanations for a variety of conducts, including “hate crimes.” I think the idea of hate crimes has done damage to our capacity to understand what happens in the case of gender crime. Sometimes I hear people quoting me and saying that I write about gender hate crimes. I have never used that term. Hate crime is an explanation that refers to an intimate feeling, the feeling of

hatred, which I believe is a feeble interpretation. It is also a mono-causal explanation, and I believe that causality and, even worse, mono-causality is a very shallow way of dealing with any kind of human action.

A second form of mono-causality, which is also a way of reducing our understanding of those crimes, is the idea of redressing masculinity. This thesis, which has become very strong, asserts that men have to kill because they feel emasculated; that is to say, in order to restore their masculinity – in the case of Ciudad Juárez, for example, because women find more employment than men in the maquiladoras. I don’t deny that there may be an element of this, but when we speak of that as a unique explanation, we reduce the complexity of the gender scene we are dealing with.

The third and most simplistic

mono-causal explanation is sexual satisfaction. The aggressors, some claim, had sexual satisfaction as their main end. This is a ridiculous testosterone explanation. In fact, we shouldn’t even speak of sexual crimes, but instead about the torturing of women by sexual means.

Ciudad Juárez is not the most violent city in the world in gender terms, but, in order to render intelligible the very intriguing type of crime against women occurring there, one has to confront some feminist views. There is a strong debate within the lines of feminism about the need or not to separate different types of lethal aggression against women. I am convinced that although all femicides obey the gender dispositive, the end of impunity depends upon typifying and discriminating at least two large classes of these crimes: those whose triggering factors could

be attributed to personal and interpersonal motivations, and crimes that are truly impersonal and target women in general or women of a particular type as a genus, in the strict sense. The latter category includes, for example, aggression against women in the context of the new type of wars – informal, non conventional wars; aggression against women in the context of human trafficking; the sacrifice of female babies or undernourishment of female children in Asia; etc.

*Please, tell us now something about the third phase in your research about Brazil, the country where you teach.*

The newest phase, the third one, is ongoing. I also entered into it upon request. This new work allowed me to see history unfold in front of my very eyes. The research has to do with violence again; in this case, the increasing violence facing indigenous women in Brazil. Two indigenous women requested that Brazil's National Indian Foundation, which is a state organism, hold a workshop where they could learn the gender and human rights vocabulary to phrase their problems and present their demands to the new Worker's Party government, which took office in January 2003. I was hired to conduct a workshop of seven straight days, listening and reacting to a group of 41 indigenous women from all regions in Brazil and from very different societies. Most of them could speak Portuguese with some difficulty. They presented a variety of problems and were seeking the right words to develop adequate narratives to speak to the

new authorities. Theirs were tales of suffering and aggression resulting from the expansion and intrusion of external agents – central state institutions, NGOs, private enterprises, mining corporations, among others – into village and communal life. The work I started there continued for 10 years and involved the observation of what I call the "state front," the colonial-modernizing front of state agents or state-backed private entrepreneurs in the village environment. It has to do with state intervention through NGOs and state agents themselves in the fields of health, education and other services. The law and public policies also must be taken into account. The outcome of the situation is permanent colonization. We are not speaking of Spanish colonization of the sixteenth-century type, but of a huge country where there are still about 60 native societies never yet contacted by the external world. The expansion of the state during these last 10 years has been accompanied by an increase of violence against and within native societies, and particularly an increase in intra-village gender violence. The paradox, I recently realized, is the fact that women, white or Indian, have received from new laws and public policies a capacity for denouncing violence they never had before, yet at the same time, we, white or Indian, have experienced an increase in our vulnerability.

I present that paradox to you with some numbers. For example, in Brazil, one woman is killed every two hours; this means that, surrounded by laws, shelters or other institutions for

refuge, advocacy and debate, and considerable expansion of a now nearly omnipresent state, a woman is killed every two hours. Homicide is the third leading cause of death for women of fertile age in Brazil. An expansion of lethal aggression has gone hand in hand with so-called state protection.

*Let me end with a question about whether or not you feel that the contemporary world, including phenomena such as the "modernization" of Brazil, has contributed to increasing violence against women?*

I notice an intensification of cruelty against women's bodies. Conventional wars had terrible consequences for women. In the old conventional wars, with conquered territories came the insemination of women's bodies. Soldiers raped the women of conquered territories as if women's bodies were extensions of those territories.

But what happens today to women in places like Ciudad Juárez, which I have referred to as a laboratory for cruelty, is something new, and is related to the variety of informal wars expanding on our continent. I mean, for instance, para-state wars, the operatives of para-state organizations such as the one in Colombia Professor Pilar Riaño writes about in this issue, and similar cases in Guatemala, El Salvador and Peru. In addition, trafficking of illegal drugs, arms and human beings, and various other types of lucrative criminal activities, produce growing volumes of undeclared capital, which, through a spreading articulation between organized crime and

representational politics (I mean electoral politics, to be brief), is channeled into “democratic” elections for the purchase of votes and consciousness. The flow of huge vaults of undeclared capital produced by criminal activities is protected and directed by armies of illegal mercenaries and armed corporations that respond to local chiefs. From these underground activities there results a state of unending subterranean war.

In these informal wars women’s bodies have a particular destiny. In conventional wars of the past, as I said, territories were conquered and the women in them were raped, their bodies annexed as territory themselves. In today’s informal wars, women’s bodies are sexually tortured to death. I am absolutely convinced that this is not the same as what happened in previous historical periods. This is new. Women are suffering now differently from how we suffered before, and it has to do with this informality of war and the links between organized crime and surface electoral politics in representative democracies. This is a historical change with an impact on the lives of women. Analysts and the feminist movement have to examine the new structures of state and para-state organizations and networks at work beneath the surface of society to understand the changes in the destiny and roles played by female and feminized bodies in our days.

An interesting perception and understanding of the historicity of gender and gender violence comes from acquaintance with the changing situation of women in Indian villages facing the expansion of the state. First, there was the tribal world, what one could call the

*village world* and its *pre-intrusion* history of native communities; then, progressively, with the intervention of colonial-modern republican state structures, domestic space turns private and intimate, and public space turns into the public sphere, which kidnaps politics, producing what I call the “totalitarianism of the public sphere.” This did not exist in communities not intervened by colonial-modern state structures.

In addressing these issues one finds at least three groups of feminists. First, the well-known Eurocentric group saying that modernity is the solution: Let us modernize, let us make laws, let us enforce the law, let us project and implement public policies, let us bring courts and modern justice, and we shall solve the problems of women. But I am telling you that the expansion of legal discourse in our countries goes hand in hand with expansion of violence. At the other end, one finds a group of feminists claiming that gender was invented and introduced by colonial powers. This group of feminist theorists asserts that there was no gender in pre-colonial societies. I locate myself somewhere in the middle of these two positions. I argue that in pre-intrusion societies there was a form of patriarchy I call *low-impact patriarchy*, manifesting itself as gender inequality. There was some gender hierarchy linked to the different value and prestige of the public space and the domestic space. But when colonial and modern gender and patriarchy came onto the scene, they captured what was male in that society, what was female, what was a public space and a domestic space in that

society, and introduced a new twist into those elements. Politics, for instance, became captured entirely in the public sphere, in contrast to communal pre-intrusion life.

There used to be and still is today, in communal life, a public space where only men are entitled to public speech; and a domestic space that is not private but full of people, where women authorize – or not – what men are entitled to say and do in their public space. In the pre-intrusion domestic space, there were many eyes watching, surveilling behavior. It was a space full of people, a crowded space where everyone was looking at what happened to the others. Under that surveillance you had more effective control over violence. In contrast with that, modernity has brought with it the nuclear family. The lives of women and children have been encapsulated in domestic and intimate spaces. This capsule is lethal to women. In this rarefied environment of “the home,” in its privacy, surveillance is done through the law. The law was the solution, the remedy for the maladies inoculated by modernity and westernization in their expansive path.

From the story I have seen happening before my eyes, in my decade of contact with Indian women, the law is suggested to be the remedy for the poison that modernity has introduced through the privatization of the domestic space. Privatization of an earlier truly political domestic space and transformation of gender relations into a realm of intimacy are the trap, the cavern of suffering from which the law is actually unable to rescue us. □

# Violence against Women in Latin America and the Caribbean:

## A Comparative Analysis of Population-Based Data from 12 Countries

*Pan American Health Organization Center for Disease Control and Prevention*

\* *The following is an excerpt from a newly released study available at: [www.paho.org/violence](http://www.paho.org/violence) (Pan American Health Organization, 2013). The material is published here with the authorization of Alessandra Guedes, Regional Advisor, Intra-Family Violence, PAHO-WHO*

Over the past 30 years, the international community has increasingly recognized violence against women as a public health problem, a violation of human rights, and a barrier to economic development.<sup>1-6</sup> In 1993, the United Nations (UN) General Assembly formally recognized women's right to live free of violence in the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women,<sup>1</sup> as did the Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment and Eradication of Violence against Women (Convention of Belém do Pará) in 1994.<sup>7</sup>

Both the 1993 UN Declaration and the Convention of Belém do Pará used the phrase “gender-based” violence to acknowledge that the risk factors, consequences, and responses to violence against women are heavily influenced by women's subordinate social, economic, and legal status in many settings.<sup>4,6</sup> Certain forms of violence against women, such as physical violence against women by husbands, are often tolerated or even condoned by laws, institutions, and community

norms. And, some researchers argue that violence against women may be not just a manifestation of gender inequality, but also a way of enforcing it.<sup>6,8</sup>

In fact, evidence indicates that the patterns, risk factors, and consequences of violence against women are different than those of violence against men. Worldwide, men are more likely than women to experience violence in the context of armed conflict and criminal activity, while women are more likely than men to experience violence and injury inflicted by people close to them, such as intimate partners.<sup>9</sup> Girls and women are also more likely than boys or men to experience sexual violence generally.<sup>10</sup> In addition, physical and sexual violence against women and girls has a host of reproductive health consequences that are different than the consequences of violence against men.

### **Rationale and objectives**

There is a substantial body of research on violence against women in Latin America and the Caribbean, but studies have defined and measured violence in such diverse ways that it has often been difficult to

compare findings across the Region. Studies such as the World Health Organization (WHO) Multi-country Study on Women's Health and Domestic Violence Against Women<sup>2</sup> and the GENACIS (Gender, Alcohol, and Culture) study<sup>11</sup> have gathered comparable data on violence from multiple countries using standardized questionnaires. However, they have certain limitations, such as gathering data from one or two sites per country rather than using national samples.

Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS) and Reproductive Health Surveys (RHS) were originally designed to investigate demographic and reproductive health issues, but have increasingly included brief modules on violence against women. This report presents a comparative reanalysis of data on violence against women from DHS and RHS surveys conducted between 2003 and 2009 in 12 Latin American and Caribbean countries (Bolivia, Colombia, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Jamaica, Nicaragua, Paraguay, and Peru). These nationally representative data were gathered using face-to-face interviews in the household setting. Sample sizes of

women aged 15–49 ranged from 3,568 women in Haiti 2005/6 to 37,597 women in Colombia 2005. While these DHS and RHS surveys did not use identical questionnaires, their measures of violence were similar enough to allow a comparative analysis using standardized indicators.

The overall purpose of this comparative analysis is to raise awareness of violence against women at national and regional levels. Specific objectives are to:

- Make comparative data from DHS and RHS surveys from the Region easier to access and disseminate among researchers, policy makers, and program managers.
- Increase knowledge about the prevalence, risk factors, consequences, and attitudes towards violence against women in the Region.
- Catalyze change by motivating policy makers and programmers to design and implement evidence-based strategies to prevent and respond to violence against women in the Region.

## Findings

*Intimate partner violence against women is widespread in every Latin American and Caribbean country where these DHS and RHS surveys were conducted, though prevalence varies by setting.*

In all 12 Latin American and Caribbean countries, large percentages of women ever married or in union reported ever experiencing physical or sexual violence by an intimate

partner, ranging from 17.0% in the Dominican Republic 2007 to slightly more than half (53.3%) in Bolivia 2003.....

*Intimate partner violence ranges from occasional moderate acts to long-term, chronic situations of abuse, sometimes called 'battering'.....*

In all surveys in this analysis, a majority of women who experienced any physical violence ever reported experiencing 'severe' acts of physical violence, such as being hit with a fist, or threatened or wounded with a knife or other weapon. In addition, women often reported having been forced by a partner to have sex.

*Emotional abuse and controlling behaviors are also widespread in these countries.*

Emotional abuse by intimate partners, such as insults, humiliation, intimidation, and threats of harm, was widespread in these Latin American and Caribbean countries.... Similarly, large proportions of women in the Region reported that their current or most recent partner used three or more controlling behaviors, such as trying to isolate them from family or friends, insisting on knowing where they were at all times, or limiting their access to money.

*Emotional abuse and controlling behaviors are closely linked to physical violence by partners.*

In all countries, a majority of women who experienced physical violence *in the past 12 months* also reported emotional abuse, ranging from 61.1% in Colombia 2005 to 92.6% in El Salvador 2008..... In contrast, emotional abuse was relatively uncommon—ranging

from 7.0% in Haiti 2005/6 to 18.9% in Bolivia 2008—among women who reported no physical partner violence *in the past 12 months*. These findings support evidence that emotional abuse and controlling behaviors often accompany physical violence and are important dimensions of intimate partner violence.<sup>12</sup>....

*Sociodemographic factors associated with partner violence vary by country.*

In many countries, the prevalence of physical or sexual intimate partner violence ever or *in the past 12 months* was significantly higher among urban compared with rural women, among divorced or separated women compared with married women, among women who were currently or recently employed compared with those who were not, and among women in the lowest wealth or education categories compared with those in the highest....

*The prevalence and odds of intimate partner violence are not always highest among those with the least wealth or education.*

While the prevalence of intimate partner violence was usually, but not always, lowest among women with the highest levels of wealth and education, it did not always consistently decline as education or wealth quintile increased. In some countries, the highest levels of intimate partner violence were reported by women at intermediate, not the lowest, levels of wealth or education. Similar findings have been reported from other places in the world,<sup>13</sup> ....

*Women cite many different situations that 'trigger' intimate*

*partner violence, but in nearly all settings, partners' alcohol consumption plays an important role.*

Women who experienced intimate partner violence *in the past 12 months* cited many situations that triggered their partner's violence, but in almost all surveys, a partner's drunkenness or drug use was the single most commonly cited situation.... This finding corresponds with a large body of evidence that men's alcohol abuse increases women's risk of experiencing intimate partner violence,<sup>14, 15</sup> including an analysis of WHO Multi-country Study data.<sup>16</sup>

*Intimate partner violence often has serious physical and mental health consequences.*

In all 12 countries, large proportions of women who experienced partner violence *ever* and/or *in the past 12 months* reported being physically injured as a result, including 'minor' injuries such as bruises and pain as well as more 'severe' injuries such as broken bones, burns, and knife wounds. These findings support a large body of global evidence that intimate partner violence is a public health problem with serious consequences for women's physical health, including physical injury, disability, and chronic pain.<sup>6, 9, 17, 18</sup>

..... This comparative analysis also documented widespread emotional and mental health consequences of intimate partner violence..... These findings support growing evidence that violence against women contributes to the burden of mental ill health among women both globally and within the Region,<sup>18-21</sup> and that it takes a heavy toll on

women's economic productivity.<sup>22</sup>

*Intimate partner violence is closely linked to a number of key reproductive health indicators.*

In almost all countries, the prevalence of physical or sexual intimate partner violence *ever* or *in the past 12 months* was significantly higher among women who reported a younger age at first birth, among women who had higher parity (number of live births), and among women whose last live birth was unintended or unwanted..... percentages fall within the range of 3-13% of women reporting intimate partner violence during pregnancy from global literature reviews,<sup>23-25</sup> as well as from studies on violence during pregnancy from countries in the Region such as Brazil,<sup>26</sup> Mexico,<sup>27-30</sup> and Peru.<sup>31, 32</sup>....

*Help-seeking behaviors by women who experience violence vary widely by country.*

The proportion of women who sought help for intimate partner violence, either by telling someone close to them or by seeking institutional help, varied widely by country.... Women cited many different reasons for not seeking help, including shame, fear of retaliation, not knowing where to go, and not believing that anyone would help.

*Large proportions of women in Latin America and the Caribbean report sexual violence in their lifetime, perpetrated mostly by men known to them.*

Substantial proportions of women in Latin American and Caribbean countries with recent DHS or RHS surveys reported experiencing sexual violence at some point in their

lifetime, either by an intimate partner or by someone else....

*Forced and unwanted sexual initiation occurs at early ages for many young women and girls in the Region.*

Small but substantial proportions of young women in all surveys reported that their first intercourse was 'forced'. Husbands, partners, and boyfriends were the most commonly reported perpetrators in those surveys that measured this indicator....

*Exposure to violence in childhood raises the risk of other forms of violence later in life and has important negative intergenerational effects.*

This comparative analysis produced a number of findings that suggest exposure to violence in childhood may have long-term and intergenerational effects.....

*The acceptability of violence against women by partners is widespread but varies by setting.*

Agreement with the acceptability of wife-beating for at least one reason varied widely by country, ranging from 2.9% of women in Jamaica 2008/9 to 38.2% in Ecuador 2004. Support for wife-beating was significantly higher among rural than among urban women, and among women who had experienced physical or sexual intimate partner violence *in the past 12 months*, compared with those who had not... researchers have also suggested that support for wife-beating may be declining in some countries in the Region, as did authors of a longitudinal study from Nicaragua,<sup>33</sup> for example.

**There is also widespread agreement in the Region with norms that reinforce gender inequality, discourage women from seeking**

### help, or downplay the duty of bystanders to intervene in situations of abuse.

In many countries, large proportions of women supported norms that reinforce gender inequality or discourage families and communities from helping women who experience violence, though levels of agreement with these norms varied widely among and within countries.....

violence against women.

- There is a need to improve the response to violence against women by key institutions across all sectors....
- The close link between different types of violence, including evidence that violence has strong intergenerational effects, suggests there might be value in comprehensive strategies that address multiple types

identified a number of specific strategies as effective or at least promising, including the following:

- Reform both criminal and civil legislation.
- Carry out media and advocacy campaigns to raise awareness about existing legislation.
- Strengthen women's ability to exercise their civil rights related to divorce, property, child support and custody,

### Evidence suggests that violence against women can be prevented.

**While women experience violence in all settings, prevalence varies widely, indicating that high levels of violence are not an inevitable feature of human society.**

### Recommendations for future research

This comparative analysis highlights the need for research on violence against women to incorporate lessons learned about how to measure such violence in scientifically rigorous and ethically sound ways, as well as in ways that will maximize comparability across different settings.....

### Recommendations for programs and policies

- Policy makers and programmers in Latin America and the Caribbean should address violence against women and children, given the widespread prevalence and the significant negative health, economic, and human rights consequences that result from such violence.
- Evidence suggests that violence against women can be prevented.....Work by WHO and others<sup>22, 34-36</sup> documents examples of strategies that have shown potential for preventing

of violence and multiple generations simultaneously.

- Policy makers and programmers should address norms and attitudes in the Region that support gender inequity or that view violence against women as a 'private' matter....

### Promising strategies for preventing and responding to violence against women

In 2008, United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon launched the global campaign called UNiTE to End Violence against Women,<sup>37</sup>....In recent years, a number of international reviews have synthesized what is known about how to prevent and respond to violence against women and girls.<sup>4, 22, 34-36, 38, 39</sup> These reviews suggest a need for investment in both prevention and response, and for comprehensive, multi-sectoral, long-term actions that involve collaboration between governments and civil society at different levels of society. These reviews have also

employment, and freedom from sexual harassment in the workplace.

- Build coalitions and networks of government and civil society institutions that can collaborate to develop and implement comprehensive approaches to addressing violence against women.
- Use community mobilization and mass communication to achieve social change.
- Work to transform whole institutions in every sector using a gender perspective; in particular, integrate attention to violence against women into sexual and reproductive health services.
- Promote social and economic empowerment of women and girls.
- Engage men and boys to promote nonviolence and gender equity.
- Provide early intervention services to at-risk families. □

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# Traces of Ethnic and Gender Violence in the Upper Guajira of Colombia

Pilar Riaño-Alcalá  
University of British Columbia



Colombian General Commander of the Military Forces Freddy Padilla walks next to Colombian Wayuu indigenous people during a meeting between the army and villagers of the town of Uribia, in La Guajira Department, close to the border with Venezuela in January 2010. The Wayuu have been caught up in the conflict between Colombia's army, FARC guerrillas and paramilitary forces.

A growing number of scholars and human rights activists are documenting variations in sexual violence in the context of war, seeking to better understand the relationships between gender violence and armed conflicts (Wood 2004 & 2009; Wills 2011; Wills and Riaño 2012). This article reviews a case of ethnic- and gender-based violence, the 2004 massacre of Bahía Portete. During the massacre, paramilitary

forces murdered six indigenous Wayuu, four of them women; tortured several others; and forcibly displaced the entire community from its ancestral territory in the Guajira region of northeastern Colombia. The following discussion aims to illustrate an approach to the reconstruction of historical memory that is attentive to variations in the repertoires of violence used by different armed actors and the differential impacts of war on men and women.

The research on the Bahía Portete massacre was part of a larger study on women, war and resistance in the Caribbean region of Colombia by the country's Commission on Historical Memory. The study documented the repertoires of violent practices, gender arrangements and social order the paramilitaries<sup>1</sup> imposed between 1995 and 2010 on the daily lives of women and men in one of the regions most affected by the war.<sup>2</sup> From 1997-2005, the United

Self-Defense Forces of Colombia (AUC, its acronym in Spanish), conducted a ruthless campaign of political, military and social dominance in the Caribbean coastal region of Colombia, where various left-wing guerrilla groups such as the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia-People's Army (FARC-EP) and the Popular Liberation Army (EPL) were active. To advance this consolidation, the AUC sought to "pacify" the region by subjecting the civilian population to forced disappearances, massacres, selective assassinations, rape and sexual violence, and massive displacements. Through various forms of violence, the AUC maintained a strict and despotic regulation of femininity and masculinity as a cornerstone of its domination strategy.<sup>3</sup>

The social order the paramilitaries imposed on men and women varied according to the local context but in general established control of communities and daily life. The strategy in the Upper Guajira presented some variations as the paramilitary sought to vanquish the historical resistance of the Wayuu people to the occupation of their territory. The Wayuu represented the last obstacle in advancing the AUC's project to consolidate its military and territorial domain along the Caribbean coast.

The Bahía Portete massacre took place on April 18, 2004. On that day, between 40 and 50 paramilitary men entered Bahía Portete escorted by members of the Colombian army and three local Wayuu, crossed their vast territory and, list in hand, proceeded to torture, dismember, burn, kill and disappear the victims while sacking and looting their homes and desecrating the cemetery (Grupo de Memoria Histórica 2010).

A significant variation observed in the repertoires of violence associated with this massacre is that the victims

were mainly women. This is in contrast with the trend documented for the majority of massacres in the country. The Commission on Historical Memory has documented 2505 massacres in Colombia between 1982 and 2007. In 74% of these massacres, the victims were only men, while in 25.7% the victims were both men and women (with a maximum of 1 or 2 women).

The Wayuu's gender arrangements operate within a set of expectations, norms and practices defined by a matrilineal principle of social organization. Territorial boundaries, collective responsibility in conflicts, and rules for compensation for injuries during war or conflict are defined by this principle. During wartime, Wayuu men lead and engage in combat while women are responsible for tending to the injured and burying the dead (Guerra 2002; Mancuso 2006). Women therefore have a special condition of immunity; they cannot be fired upon or targeted in war or vengeance-related violence because of their responsibility for picking up the dead and injured, communicating with the sacred world of spirits and dreams and, in modern times, acting as appointed leaders and fulfilling the roles of intermediaries and representatives to the non-Wayuu world (Mancuso 2006; Ponce-Jiménez 2006).<sup>4</sup>

The massacre had profoundly destabilizing implications for the Wayuu people. The victims were Wayuu women with a specific profile: social leaders, storytellers and keepers of oral tradition, merchants, mothers, aunts and cousins. By torturing and murdering these women, looting their houses and stealing objects of great cultural value (such as precious stones), the perpetrators were meting out exemplary punishment to women who were known for their roles as leaders and social intermediaries, as well as their

resistance to the armed occupation of their land. They were targeted not only for their emblematic identities as leaders and resisters, but also their reproductive role as mothers and aunts. To communicate the message of exemplary punishment, public performance was key. Two of the women, Margoth and Rosa, were taken outside and tortured, burned, dismembered and killed in broad daylight, with several community members as witnesses. The bodies of two other victims, one of them a child, disappeared.

In contrast with the scenario we have found in other massacres, the torture and murders in Bahía Portete were performed at sites of great social and historical significance: the *jagüey* (the main source of water in a semi-desert region), the school, the sacred hills and the cemetery. The violence therefore desecrated not only the women's bodies, but their ancestral land as well.

To drive home the message of sexual terror, the paramilitaries left behind sexually explicit graffiti depicting images of rape and made death threats against two surviving women leaders. The graffiti was painted on the walls of the house of one of the assassinated leaders and in the health center. Since the massacre, graffiti with sexually explicit violent threats has continued to appear in these two places.

In the Bahía Portete massacre, sexual violence doubled as a form of ethnic violence given the paramilitaries' intention to raze the territory and attack key cultural forms. In these events, we can find elements of what Elisabeth Wood calls sexual violence as a group instrument; that is, the use of sexual violence as a means of group control manifested through torture or sexual humiliation or as a form of punishment directed towards a particular group (Wood 2009).

## Report

Massacres are violent social actions with the explicit purpose of attacking civilian populations, but they are also communicative events. In the case of Bahía Portete, women and men were attacked differently, not only in the type of acts that were committed against them but also in the effects these events had on them and what they communicated. The sexual torture of the female body became an instrument and language to communicate military supremacy by the male perpetrators, the *alijuna* – foreigners – over Wayuu men. In the use of sexual violence as a group instrument, the attack was also an assault on the honor of the Wayuu men, who were not able to protect the women of the community. The attack was directed at their masculinity

and social role as warriors, in which physical and emotional strength and control of the environment are central. For the Wayuu, the paramilitary operated outside of the warrior code of honor. In their collective memory, the attackers are remembered not as enemies, much less the honorable enemies expected in Wayuu society. Instead, they are thought of as *uchis*, predatory birds, or *coi*, African bees that attack without provocation and in large groups.

In this landscape of fear and terror, the main demand of the people of Bahía Portete is to be able to return to their land and find the bodies of the disappeared. The return is also seen as the pivotal action towards the restoration of the social order and the restructuring of

the community's social and spiritual worlds. This struggle has been led by women, who have used creative strategies, both private and public, to demand justice and truth about the violence against the Wayuu. Since 2005, they have organized an annual commemoration of the massacre, during which event the Wayuu of Bahía Portete temporarily return to their land to share, remember and plan their agenda for return. The commemorations are attended by Wayuu from various regions of the Guajira and Venezuela, members of other indigenous Embera and Nasa groups, human rights and solidarity activists, as well as victims' organizations, students and women's groups. □

<sup>1</sup> Gender arrangements are those formal and informal agreements within a specific structure of social relations that are centered on reproduction and sexuality and are key distributors of power relations. These arrangements are reproduced socially and influence individual actions, the exercise of power, and the ways power is reinforced by and contributes to a context of violence (GMH 2012; Wills and Riaño 2012).

<sup>2</sup> The study was conducted by the gender area of the Colombian Commission on Historical Memory through a participatory process of historical memory with women's networks and social organizations active in the region, as well as through documentary and statistical research into the repertoires of violence and gender arrangements at the national and local levels and among armed actors. The team members were: Maria Emma Wills, Pilar Riaño, Martha Nubia Bello, Maria Luisa Moreno, Viviana Quintero and Jesús Abad Colorado.

<sup>3</sup> These strategies and practices are detailed in the three reports on gender and violence produced by the Commission on Historical Memory: *Women Making History. Land, Body and Politics in the Colombian Caribbean. A Report by the Historical Memory Commission of the National Commission on Reparation and Reconciliation (Colombia)*. Bogotá: Taurus, 2011. 168 pages. In Spanish; *Women and War. Victims and Resisters in the Colombian Caribe. A Report by the Historical Memory Commission of the National Commission on Reparation and Reconciliation (Colombia)*. Bogotá: Taurus, 2011. 168 pages. In Spanish; *The Massacre of Bahía Portete. Wayuu Women in the Crosshairs. A Report by the Historical Memory Group of the National Commission on Reparation and Reconciliation (Colombia)*. Bogotá: Taurus, 2010. 231 pages. In Spanish.

<sup>4</sup> Women's immunity to violence in the context of war, however, does not necessarily extend to other spheres such as domestic or family relationships. The Wayuu, since colonial times, have adapted their economic strategies, cultural identities, gender roles and arrangements to the demands of a market society through increased migration to larger urban centers and active exchanges with the non-Wayuu world. Within this landscape, other internal forms of violence, such as domestic and intrafamiliar, do take place.

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*Women in San Juan de Yanayacu, near Iquitos, Peru. A 2005 World Health Organization survey of the comparative incidence of domestic violence among women in 11 nations found the highest current and lifetime rates in rural Ethiopia, with rural Peru coming in second.*

# Toward a Global History of Domestic Violence

Elizabeth H. Pleck  
University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign

I published the first historical monograph about the history of domestic violence in 1987. My book, entitled *Domestic Tyranny*, was not concerned with the history of family dynamics but rather with the waxing and waning of interest in the social problem of domestic violence in the United States, beginning with the colonial era. Most of the book-length historical studies of domestic violence have concerned North America or Europe. Historians, law professors and anthropologists writing about Latin America, the Middle East, Africa and Asia have published articles and a few books that contribute insights from their geographic and historical vantage points. Latin

American scholars came to this subject earlier and have written more extensively than scholars studying other areas of the Global South. The explanation for Latin American interest in the history of domestic violence appears to be its connection to important topics in Latin American history, such as the demise of the Spanish empire and the emergence of liberal republics, the high level of violence in many Latin American countries, and the cultural significance of honor codes and machismo. Moreover, social movements often spur scholarly inquiry, as in the increasing public attention given to domestic violence by women's groups in Latin America during periods of dictatorship and civil unrest.

One perennial problem for historical writing about domestic violence is defining what is meant by the phrase. In the 1970s, feminist activists in North America and Europe began using the term "domestic violence" to broaden the definition of family to include cohabiters and the divorced, and to gain more acceptance and funding with gender-neutral language to replace the older term "wife beating." Over time, the definition of domestic violence came to include not only physical abuse but also marital rape, threats of violence and verbal assaults. Subsequent activists have preferred the term "gender-based violence" because it encompasses a wider range of abuse and relationships between the perpetrator and the victim,



*Woman in the rural area of San José de Aymara, Huancavelica, Peru. Family privacy makes the very mention of domestic violence a taboo, with women victims keeping secret what occurs behind closed doors because it is too shameful to reveal.*

including phenomena more common in the Global South, such as dowry deaths, female genital mutilation, child marriage, coerced marriage, sex trafficking and prostitution, honor killings and acid attacks. Gender-based violence also comprises rape (other than marital rape), so common during recent wars and conflicts (such as those in Bosnia, Rwanda, South Africa, Liberia, Colombia and the Congo). Even the word “domestic” in the phrase domestic violence is not a simple matter to define. The further back one goes in history, the more likely domestic arrangements are to include a diverse number of relationships to the head of the household, including foster children, apprentices, servants, boarders and in-laws.

The other perennial problem in writing the history of domestic violence is defining the term

“privacy.” Notions about family privacy invariably serve as barriers to outside intervention in a home where domestic violence is occurring. Proponents of non-intervention often argue that it is in the best interests of both the family and the state to allow family members to sort out their conflicts among themselves, usually with an eye to preserving broad authority of the head of the household. (In Latin America, the phrase “*cada uno es rey en su casa*” – every man is king in his own home – embodies this view). Another meaning of privacy is the enforced seclusion of women and girls by restricting or confining them to domestic space. One of the most common complaints of men who act violently against their wives is that the women are violating these restrictions and thus deserve punishment. They restrict

women to the home for several reasons: because they are jealous, authoritarian, or believe that women neglect household responsibilities if they are free to move about. At the same time, many women not only accept such restrictions but also enforce them. Family privacy makes the very mention of domestic violence a taboo, with women victims keeping secret what occurs behind closed doors because it is too shameful to reveal.

The study of the history of domestic violence always generates debate about whether the incidence is higher now (because norms of privacy have expanded, isolating and silencing the victim) or lower because of a very long civilizing process that has made interpersonal violence less justifiable and acceptable; accorded women education, the right to divorce, and higher status; and

posed self-control, especially among men, as a necessary antidote to open expressions of anger and rage. The perennial problem with the use of most criminal statistics as evidence of the incidence of domestic violence is that one can never be sure whether reported crime represents actual incidence or increased willingness to report, and whether statistics from one place and time are comparable to those from another.

The 2005 World Health Organization survey of women in 11 nations is the best study of comparative rates of the prevalence of domestic violence in the contemporary world. The study deployed field researchers native to each country to survey 24,000 women in rural and urban locations, using a standardized questionnaire. It defined domestic violence as behavior within an intimate relationship that causes physical, sexual or psychological harm, including acts of physical aggression, sexual coercion, psychological abuse and controlling behaviors. The highest current and lifetime rates of domestic violence were found in rural Ethiopia, with rural Peru coming in second; the lowest rates were in urban Japan. The rate is also very high in other countries, as reported in less comprehensive surveys.

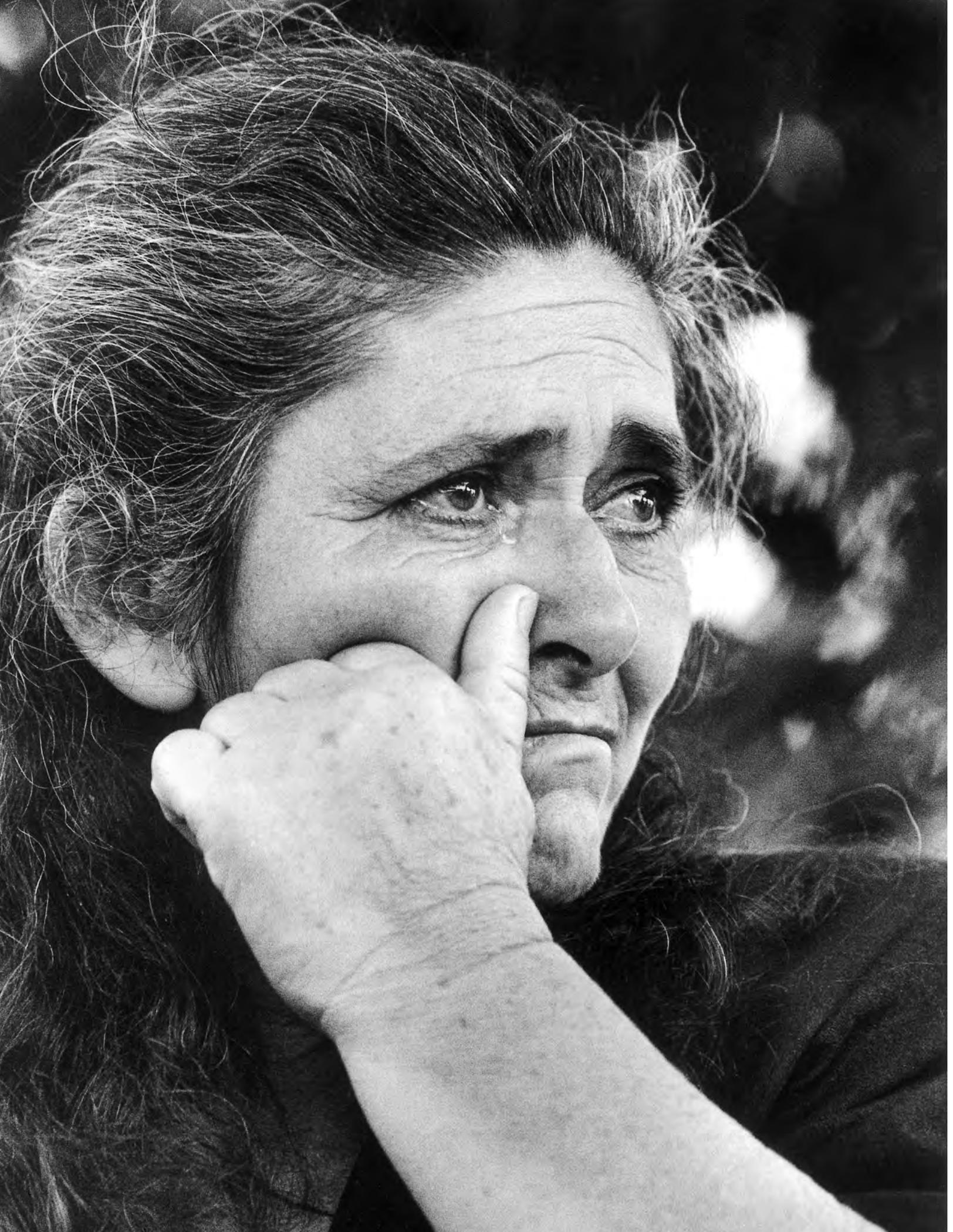
Because Ethiopia was never colonized, the high rates there cannot be attributed to foreign control of the nation's territory and institutions. Attributes of a country and its culture that might seem to be related to domestic violence would include the status of women and the way it is connected to culture and custom, religion, rural life, political representation, access to legal recourses for women victims,

age at marriage and reproductive freedom. Even more telling are the comparative surveys of attitudes toward wife beating in Ethiopia (as well as Mali and Uganda). Researchers find nearly universal acceptance of wife beating under certain circumstances by both men and women in these countries. To compare, even if the tendency to hide domestic violence were considerably higher in urban Japan, for example, than in rural Ethiopia—a questionable assumption in itself—it would have to be concealed by a factor of seven to make up for the differential in incidence between the two countries. It follows from such contemporary survey information that domestic violence was probably more common in the past than in the present, and more common still in the developing than the developed world because of the associated structural factors identified above, including a generalized acceptance among women of domestic violence as fact of life.

Many cultures around the world imposed restrictions on the free movement of women and girls outside the home. Despite, or perhaps because of, these restrictions on their movement, many abused women tried to run away. It is true that relatives sometimes intervened on behalf of an abused woman, but there is ample evidence that abused women often took matters into their own hands, precisely because relatives were unavailable or did not side with them and because there was no possibility for legal intervention on their behalf. Husbands resorted to various stratagems to disown the wife's debts or force her to return. The law often punished women victims of

violence with little or no regard for the reasons they provided for having to leave a violent home. Judges often accepted male justifications for the violence they meted out against a wife: She did not wash the clothes, neglected housework and the children, or left the house too freely. Despite the huge variation in world legal systems, and indeed whether family violence was punished at all as a crime, a lack of inquiry into their cases or sympathy for wives who ran away from home was remarkably common. Abused women who ran away from home were not merely sent back; some were sent to prison. The rationale for doing so was that a wife was the property of her husband and as such belonged in the home, and a woman who violated these fundamental beliefs was deserving of punishment. Attitudes such as these governed ideas about woman's place in legal systems across world history.

The new history of domestic violence continues to unearth examples from across the globe of legal inaction, male justifications for violence, female submission and a record of substantial resistance by women. This work shows that violence was a systemic feature of inequalities between the sexes and by age in families and communities around the world and that, as often as not, the law functioned to perpetuate abuse rather than to punish domestic violence. Historical research, however bleak the many stories it tells, also offers the hope that in our own times we are becoming more aware of domestic violence as a serious and multifaceted social problem prevalent in cultures around the world. □



# Walking with Colombia's Women

*Jesús Abad Colorado*



**T**hey are women from different parts of Colombia. They are peasants and city women, mothers and daughters. They are wives or partners, and in many cases widows as a result of injustice, intolerance and war. They are teachers and they are wise, and those who did not get the chance to learn how to read when they were children are the first to register for literacy programs, despite their age and gray hair.

Colombia's women know how to demand their rights, because for many years those rights were taken away from them. Even today, some are violently silenced in their own homes. Now they are writing their own history and teaching us about the importance of memory, so that we do not forget and repeat the same mistakes. These women are present in these images because of their valor and dignity, because of their beauty and strength. And they are united through a common goal: achieving a country that is more fair and equitable for everyone.





C O M M E N T A R I E S

# Celebrity Diplomacy and New Technologies

Innovating the Strategies to End Violence against Women

*Enzo di Taranto*

*UNiTE\**



*Actress Angelina Jolie, in her role as UN envoy, speaking at a news conference at the April 2013 London G8 meeting about the use of sexual violence against women in armed conflicts.*

The vertiginously rapid changes occurring in today's global society are shaking paradigms and stereotypes traditionally related to violence against women (VAW).

In the pursuit of new solutions to end VAW, global and local leaders ought to consider four dynamics that are reshaping the foundations of human behavior as known during the last 2000 years:

- a) The crisis of the four main models of social leadership (politics, family, school and religion);
- b) Globalization;
- c) The affirmation of women's rights in both industrialized and developing countries;
- d) Social media and new communications technologies.

The launch of the UNiTE campaign in 2008 (endviolence.un.org) marked a cornerstone in the fight against VAW. Led by United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon, this multi-stakeholders, multimedia, global campaign has been instrumental in raising awareness about VAW. The initiative makes effective use of innovative tools, including celebrity participation, at the global, regional, national and local levels. Inspired by the progress achieved in affirming the rights of women in Latin America, the campaign's first regional component was launched in Guatemala in 2009, followed by a Caribbean component in 2010.

Indeed, "celebrity diplomacy"<sup>1</sup> is a modern campaigning resource available to leaders and activists worldwide. As a result of the shrinking influence of traditional role models (e.g., politicians,

Goodwill Ambassador Angelina Jolie addressed world leaders at the 2013 G8 Meeting in London to fight against the use of rape as a tactical weapon of war. As a result, the G8 has adopted the "Declaration on Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict," which identifies a series of practical steps, such as denying amnesty to perpetrators during peace negotiations and developing a comprehensive international protocol.

However, solutions to VAW are not sustainable without the active participation of men. Hence, the UN Secretary-General launched in 2009 the "Network of Men Leaders" (NoML), a coalition of influential men - from the worlds of politics, the arts, sports and culture - advocating for the end of VAW in their respective industries and communities. The active

## "How the World would be today if Gandhi could use a webcam?"

*Quote inspired by a telecom video produced by film director Spike Lee*

Without analyzing these dynamics in detail, this short paper highlights some aspects of their impact on VAW and suggests new strategies to tackle it in more creative and innovative ways.

### **New forms of leadership: celebrities**

For centuries, the absence of a mass media kept violence against women - both physical and emotional - out of the public spotlight. Only during the last decade have engagement by world leaders and modern communications campaigns given it a truly global resonance.

teachers and priests), the advocacy power of celebrities has grown exponentially during the last decade. The contribution to the UNiTE campaign of UN Messenger of Peace and Oscar-winning actress Charlize Theron has been crucial in attracting global media attention and encouraging many abused women to speak out for their rights. Similarly, UN Women's Goodwill Ambassador and Academy Award-winning actress Nicole Kidman traveled to Haiti after the 2010 earthquake to raise awareness of gender-based violence during the recovery process. Most recently, UNHCR

engagement of world leaders such as Peace Nobel Laureates Desmond Tutu and Muhammad Yunus, renowned author Paulo Coelho, and former Latin American Presidents Ricardo Lagos (Chile) and César Gaviria (Colombia) can help men understand that VAW is a legacy of the past, and that both genders must work together to overcome the challenges of the Third Millennium.

### **New forms of communication: videogames**

While celebrities may play a positive role in the fight against VAW, their role modeling may

also have controversial effects. For instance, in 2010 news broke worldwide that two of the most popular music stars - Rihanna and Chris Brown – had been involved in a case of domestic violence. The news went viral on the web, with diverging views of Chris's actions and Rihanna's supposed inaction. A similar case involving nine-time Grammy winner Mary J. Blige and her partner also gained wide and varied web coverage. Without making here any judgment on these stars' conduct, these examples are suggested to highlight the amplifying power of new media on celebrities' behaviors toward VAW.

Aware of the importance of new social languages, especially among youth, the UN Population Fund (UNFPA), the Population Media Center and the Emergent Media Center teamed up to create a videogame designed to positively influence boys' mental paradigms toward girls ([www.populationmedia.org](http://www.populationmedia.org)). Sponsored by soccer star Samuel Eto'o, this hybrid form of education and entertainment aims at breaking traditional male stereotypes about macho culture and bullying. The videogame is a cutting-

edge example of creativity and innovation that promises to raise the bar in the fight against VAW at both the global and local levels.

### **New forms of training: the holistic approach**

Like most expressions of human violence, VAW results from the "inner poverty" of the perpetrators. Unless used deliberately as a weapon of war, gender-based violence is primarily a form of uncontrolled behavior, often triggered by poor education, violent role models, drugs and alcohol. Indeed, a spiritually and emotionally balanced man should possess enough resources to express his inner imbalances through dialogue instead of violence.

While traditional approaches to end VAW – including data collection, legislation and law enforcement – are still necessary, it is critical to develop innovative educational tools enabling men to better read and respect women's emotions. One example is the "XZen Celebrity Training Lab," an online personal development platform providing techniques – such as meditation, visualization and breathing – that can help

men improve their self-control and avoid VAW. Furthermore, the XZen "TrainingSphere" provides social media tools, including blogs and online communities, to foster knowledge-sharing about other innovative training approaches. This new science of self-focused leadership is currently being tested in Europe, the Dominican Republic and Haiti to develop innovative personal tools for improving emotional management. The end goal is to enable people – both men and women – to solve interpersonal crises through verbal and spiritual communication, instead of degenerating into physical violence.

In conclusion, the emergence of new leadership models, the unprecedented ability to reach billions of people online at low cost, as well as recent progress in human education, now make possible the execution of more systemic strategies to end VAW. In particular, the appropriate use of celebrity diplomacy, together with innovative, attitude-changing videogames and online holistic trainings, are promising elements for preventing gender-based violence, globally and forever. □

<sup>1</sup> Enzo di Taranto is a world-renowned strategist and manager of complex global programs and campaigns, including the United Nations Secretary General's campaign "UNiTE to End VAW" ([endviolence.un.org](http://endviolence.un.org)). Since 1990, he has held leading UN positions at the organization's headquarters (Bonn, Geneva and New York) and in conflict-torn countries such as Colombia, Haiti, Kosovo, Mozambique and Nicaragua. He holds an advanced degree in Political Science and Development Economics (Cum Laude and Honors) and a master's degree in International Relations. He is fluent in English, French, Spanish and Portuguese, with an advanced knowledge of Russian. Di Taranto has completed professional training at world-class academic centers, including Harvard University, Covey Leadership Center and École Nationale d'Administration (ENA, Paris). Since 2010, he has collaborated with the Global Foundation for Democracy and Development ([www.funlode.org](http://www.funlode.org)), the Clinton Foundation ([haiti.clintonfoundation.org](http://haiti.clintonfoundation.org)), Florida International University ([www.fiu.edu](http://www.fiu.edu)) and other state-of-the-art training centers. He is the author of several videos, websites, essays and books on international affairs, including the novel *World Peace 2050* and a publication on the role of media in crisis situations co-authored by Nobel Laureate Gabriel García Márquez.

<sup>2</sup> Celebrities are defined here as top performers in one of the following industries: movies, music, sports, fashion, politics, business and media.

# UNiTE: The UN Secretary General's Campaign to End Violence against Women: A Major Mobilizing Tool

Caterina de Tena  
UNiTE



*A march protesting violence against women during the UN Conference on Sustainable Development in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil in June 2012.*

**T**oday, 603 million women live in countries where domestic violence is not yet considered a crime. International studies estimate that seven out of 10 of these women have suffered physical abuse by their partners. In other types of incidents,

about 66,000 women are killed every year.

The Secretary General of the United Nations, Ban Ki-moon, decided to take action and on February 25, 2008, launched the world campaign UNiTE to end violence against women. In announcing the initiative, Secretary Ki-Moon stated unequivocally,

“Violence against women is never acceptable, never excusable, and should never be tolerated.” The campaign is expected to last until 2015, the deadline for the completion of the UN’s Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

UNiTE’s main objectives are to raise public awareness of all forms of violence against women and girls

around the world, and to strengthen the political will and resources to prevent and respond to it. The campaign seeks to bring together governments, civil society, women's organizations, young people, the private sector, artists, the mass media, and the entire UN system, as well as individual men and women, to combat the generalized violence facing women and girls.

UNiTE was launched in Latin America and the Caribbean in November 2009. Since then, all 33 countries in the region have developed some type of action as part of the campaign. The region presents extreme forms of gender violence, accounting for about one-quarter of total feminicides that occur around the world. Many states in the region do not fulfill the obligation to protect women, sanction those responsible for aggression against them, or offer reparation to the victims. One of the most serious problems is the high level of impunity, reflected in the fact that less than 10% of judicial cases of femicide ever reach the sentencing stage. In some countries the total is actually less than 1%!

UNiTE thus established three strategic pillars/axes to direct its program in the region. The first is to reduce impunity by strengthening efforts to assist, protect and compensate victims. Since gender violence is not a private affair, UNiTE supports states in their efforts to preempt, assist, punish and eradicate all forms of violence against women and girls, as well as in establishing, strengthening and implementing legal frameworks and public services to assist, compensate and protect victims and their families.

To this end, UNiTE has sought to open spaces for exchanging information and experiences about strategic themes such as new forms of violence against women stemming from drug trafficking and organized crime. It has also promoted the development of an Investigation Protocol on Femicides that incorporates experts' recommendations to help states develop effective inquiries to sanction those responsible and ensure reparations for victims. The campaign also contributed to the establishment of the Central American and Caribbean Network of Prosecution Offices against Gender Violence.

The second axis or strategic pillar centers on prevention, so that no woman or girl ever has to suffer violence again. Insofar as violence against women and girls is the result of gender inequality and discriminatory attitudes against women, to uproot and prevent it, UNiTE seeks to promote egalitarian relations between men and women, eliminate gender stereotypes, and emphasize the fact that violence against women and girls is not natural. To achieve these goals, the campaign includes formal and informal educational and public health programs in the workplace and the community.

Finally, the third strategic pillar is to raise public awareness and social mobilization at the individual, familial and communal levels about the importance of preventing, sanctioning and eradicating violence against women. The campaign slogan, "it's everybody's responsibility," brings in social actors traditionally less committed to this cause, for instance those in the world of art, entertainment and

sports, the mass media, the private sector, faith-based, youth and other organizations, in particular those involving men and boys. This has led to the creation of various networks – UNiTE Artists' Network and Latin American Youth Network UNiTE – that have contributed to disseminate the campaign's activities and messages.

Although much work remains to be done, as reflected in the limited official data available, some changes have already taken place and the work carried out to date is bearing fruit, thanks to UNiTE and the joint efforts of governments, civil society, international cooperation and, in particular, agencies within the UN system. Awareness about and mobilization to protect women's rights have increased. Ninety-seven percent of the countries in Latin America and the Caribbean have passed laws against domestic violence, and some have even passed second-generation laws recognizing other types of violence and fostering public policies to promote a life free of violence against women and girls (Brazil, Chile, Costa Rica, Mexico, Venezuela, El Salvador, Nicaragua). Seven countries have approved laws defining femicide as a specific crime (Chile, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Mexico, Nicaragua and Paraguay).

UNiTE exemplifies some of the best practices involving coordination among various agencies within the UN system. It represents a strategic framework addressing the root causes of gender violence and all forms of violence. Its foundation is the simple but powerful premise that all women and girls have a fundamental right to live free of violence. □

# FURTHER RESOURCES

## Timeline of Progress against Gender Violence through International Agreements and Policy Commitments

Victor M. Uribe-Uran  
Florida International University

Date	International & Regional Developments
Early twentieth century	Trafficking and sexual exploitation identified as a concern within international conventions.
1948	Signing of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), the foundation for the universality of human rights that legally bind member states to respect and uphold the inalienable rights of all peoples and all nations.
1966	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. Entered into force on March 23, 1976.
1966	International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. Entered into force on January 3, 1976.
1975-1985	<p>Advocacy during the United Nations Decade of Women leads to increased prominence of the issue in the international agenda, with an initial focus on domestic violence, later expanding to cover various forms of violence against women (domestic violence, trafficking and sexual exploitation, women in detention and during armed conflict) and their links to development, peace and gender equality.</p> <p>Resolution on violence in the family adopted at the 1980 Second World Conference of the United Nations Decade for Women (Copenhagen), calling for programs to end violence and protect women and children from physical and mental abuse.</p> <p>Forward-Looking Strategies from the 1985 Third World Conference of the United Nations Decade for Women (Nairobi) call for comprehensive national prevention and response efforts through legislation, policies, support for survivors and public awareness.</p>
1975	First UN World Conference on Women in Mexico City.
1979	Adoption of the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW, entered into force in 1981) and development of its Optional Protocol (2000). The Convention reaffirms the principles of the UDHR and emphasizes the eradication of all forms of discrimination against women. It is a legally binding instrument that defines discrimination against women, identifies several forms of such discrimination, and establishes an agenda for national action to end all forms of discrimination against women. States party to this international treaty are obligated to undertake all measures necessary to protect and maintain women's human rights and end all forms of discrimination against them (due diligence standard), as well as submit national reports periodically on measures taken to comply with their treaty obligations. Though the original Convention did not explicitly mention violence against women and girls, General Recommendations 12 and 19 clarified that the Convention includes violence against women and makes detailed recommendations to signatory states.

*Adapted from information found in websites supported by the United Nations. One is by the UN Development Program's Regional Bureau for Latin America and the Caribbean. It is part of its contribution to the United Nations Inter-Agency Campaign on Women's Human Rights. See <http://freeofviolence.org/history.htm>. The other is from the UN's Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. See <http://www.endvawnow.org/en/articles/302-timeline-of-policy-commitments-and-international-agreements-.html>*

## Further Resources

1980	Second UN World Conference on Women in Copenhagen.
1985	Third UN World Conference on Women in Nairobi.
1989	Adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child or CRC (entered into force in 1990). The Convention is legally binding and obligates signatory states to recognize and uphold basic human rights and protections for children without discrimination, including protection from all forms of violence by parents or other caretakers (Article 19), sexual exploitation (Article 34) and trafficking (Article 35).
1990	The Commission of Women (CIM) publishes the “Conclusion and Recommendations of the Inter-American Consultation on Women and Violence.”
1992	The UN Committee to End Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) adopts Recommendation No. 19 on Violence Against Women, declaring that violence against women is a form of discrimination against women, reflecting and perpetuating their subordination, and requires that states eliminate violence in every sphere. All countries that have ratified CEDAW are required to prepare reports to the UN Committee every four years and to include information about the incidence of gender violence as well as measures taken to redress and eliminate it. Latin America and the Caribbean is the first and only region in the world in which all countries have ratified CEDAW. However, many countries in the region have not yet translated CEDAW and the General Recommendations into legislation, nor have they implemented policies, adopted positive actions to eliminate de facto discrimination or met their obligations.
1993	Coordinated advocacy by women’s movement and governments at the World Conference on Human Rights (Vienna) leads to historic recognition that violence against women and girls, whether perpetrated in the public or private sphere, constitutes a severe violation of rights; that women’s rights are human rights. It calls for gender integration as well as the development of gender-focused mechanisms at the international, regional and national levels to eliminate violence and discrimination against women. It also calls for the appointment of a Special Rapporteur on violence against women in the Vienna Declaration and Program of Action, and contributes to the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women.
1993	The UN General Assembly approves the landmark Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women, providing a framework for analysis and action at the national and international levels.
1993	The International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia is established, including prosecution of sexual violence within its mandate and advanced international legal responses to sexual violence in conflict, such as specific rules of procedure for submitting evidence in sexual violence cases.
1994	The International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda is established, including sexual violence in its statute and making rape a crime of genocide. The Criminal Tribunal also develops a manual on best practices in investigating and prosecuting sexual violence in conflict.
1994	The UN Commission on Human Rights adopts a resolution calling for gender integration at all levels of human rights and programmatic activity at the international, regional and national levels.

1994	<p>The UN Commission on Human Rights appoints the first UN Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women to a three-year term with a mandate that permits it to receive complaints and initiate investigations on violence against women in all UN member countries as well as treaty bodies, specialized agencies, other special rapporteurs, and intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations. It is meant to seek information about violence, its causes and consequences, and recommend measures, ways and means at the national, regional and international levels to eliminate violence against women and its causes, and to remedy its consequences. Her first report provides an overview of gender violence, while her second focuses on domestic violence and sexual slavery. The Special Rapporteur produces both country visit reports and annual thematic reports on the issue.</p>
1994	<p>On June 9, 1994, the Organization of American States (OAS) adopts the <i>Inter-American Convention to Prevent, Punish and Eradicate Violence against Women (also called Convention of Belem do Para)</i>, a new international instrument that recognizes all gender-based violence as a human rights abuse. It is the first and only legally binding instrument at the regional level on violence against women and constitutes the centerpiece of legislation on gender violence in Latin America and the Caribbean. This Convention provides an individual right of petition and the right of non-governmental organizations to lodge complaints with the Inter-American Commission of Human Rights. Twenty-nine countries have ratified the Convention (Antigua &amp; Barbuda, Argentina, Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Costa Rica, Chile, Dominica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, St. Kitts &amp; Nevis, St. Lucia, St. Vincent &amp; the Grenadines, Trinidad &amp; Tobago, Uruguay and Venezuela). Furthermore, the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women, adopted by all states represented in the UN General Assembly, stipulates in Article 4 that “States should exercise due diligence to prevent, investigate and, in accordance with national legislation, punish acts of violence against women, whether those acts are perpetrated by the State or by private persons.” Under the Convention, CIM has the responsibility to take positive measures to advance implementation of Belem do Para while the Inter-American Commission of Human Rights (IACHR) has the power to hear complaints against states that ratify it.</p>
1994	<p>The International Conference on Population and Development in Cairo recognizes that reproductive rights are human rights and that gender violence is an obstacle to women’s reproductive and sexual health and rights, education, and participation in development. It stresses the health consequences of domestic violence and harmful practices such as female genital mutilation/cutting to women’s increased risk of HIV and AIDS as a result of violence. It calls upon states to implement the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women. The Program of Action calls upon governments to take legal and policy measures to respond and prevent violence against women and girls.</p>
1994	<p>Approval of the Regional Programme of Action for Latin American and Caribbean Women, 1995-2001 during the Preparatory Conference (Mar del Plata, September 25-29, 1994). In Area V, Human Rights, Peace and Violence, three objectives are determined: 1) To consolidate full respect of the human rights of all women in the region, giving priority to the elimination of violence and discrimination based on sex, and women who are poor or refugees, taking racial and ethnic considerations into account; 2) To promote actions that reveal all types and forms of violence against women, as well as actions that lead to the elimination of violence; 3) To educate the media about the impact of broadcasting a culture of violence, in order to change prevalent negative images of women.</p>

## Further Resources

1995	The IV World Conference on Women in Beijing devotes an entire section of the Beijing Platform for Action to violence against women and girls. It identifies specific areas of action for governments to take in prevention and response to violence against women and girls. Chapter IV, Strategic Objectives and Actions, D. Para 112 states that “violence against women is an obstacle to the achievement of the objectives of equality, development and peace. Violence against women both violates and nullifies the enjoyment by women of their human rights and fundamental freedoms. The long-standing failure to protect and promote those rights and freedoms in the case of violence against women is a matter of concern to all States and should be addressed.” The emergence of state responsibility for violence in society delineated in the Beijing Platform for Action obligates states to condemn and adopt policies that eliminate violence against women. The issue of violence against women is one of the 12 areas for priority action, with an expansive definition of forms of violence. However, violence against women has not been adequately addressed in implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action in many countries in Latin America and the Caribbean.
1996	The Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) considers the proposal to create an optional protocol (OP) to the Women’s Convention. The OP –an amendment to the Convention requiring state ratification – is needed to create an individual complaints procedure allowing women to challenge discriminatory state policies and practices.
1996	General Assembly resolution 50/166 establishes the United Nations Trust Fund in Support of Actions to Eliminate Violence against Women (UN Trust Fund to End Violence against Women) as the only multilateral grant-making mechanism that supports local, national and regional efforts to end violence against women and girls. The fund is managed by the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) on behalf of the UN system.
1998	The International Criminal Court (entered into force in 2002) is established to prosecute sexual violence and gender crimes within the context of war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide, with a Gender and Children’s Unit to improve investigation and prosecution of crimes related to gender inequality, including rape and other forms of sexual violence perpetrated against women and children.
1998	The UN Commission on the Status of Women (March) is charged with reviewing four key human rights sections of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action: Human Rights of Women; Violence against Women; Women and Armed Conflict; and the Girl Child.
1998	UN Commission on Human Rights (June) is charged with reviewing the implementation of the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action and marking the five-year anniversary of the World Conference on Human Rights.
1998	Commemoration of the 50 <sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (December 10, 1998).
1999	November 25 is designated United Nations International Day for the elimination of violence against women, and the United Nations formally joins the 16 Days of Activism against Gender Violence proclaimed and commemorated by the international women’s movement since 1991.
2000	Security Council Resolution 1325 is passed, calling for special protective measures for women and girls in armed conflict and emphasizing the responsibility of all states to put an end to impunity for perpetrators.
2002	Adoption of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) Convention on Preventing and Combating Trafficking in Women and Children for Prostitution, a legally binding instrument.

2003	Adoption of the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa, with a dedicated article on violence against women in addition to references throughout the Protocol.
2004	The Commission on Human Rights appoints a Special Rapporteur on trafficking in persons, especially women and children.
2006	The Secretary-General's In-Depth Study on All Forms of Violence against Women is released, the first comprehensive report on the issue. Annual General Assembly Resolutions have been adopted annually since on the intensification of efforts to end violence against women.
2008	The United Nations Secretary-General launches an unprecedented global campaign, UNiTE to End Violence against Women, calling on governments, civil society, women's organizations, young people, the private sector, the media and the entire UN system to: 1) adopt and enforce national laws to address and punish all forms of violence against women and girls; 2) adopt and implement multi-sectoral national action plans; 3) strengthen data collection on the prevalence of violence against women and girls; 4) increase public awareness and social mobilization; and 5) address sexual violence in conflict by 2015.
2008	The Security Council adopts the landmark Resolution 1820, the first resolution devoted to addressing sexual violence in conflict and post-conflict situations.
2009	The Security Council adopts Resolution 1888 on the issue of sexual violence in armed conflict situations, providing concrete actions such as calling for the designation of a special representative to the Secretary-General on the issue, deploying international legal experts and women peace advisors to strengthen responses to sexual violence in conflict, and requesting annual reports on the resolution's implementation.  For an overview of Security Council Resolutions, see the Powerpoints on 1325 and 1820 and 1888 developed by UN Action Against Sexual Violence in Conflict.
2009	The Security Council adopts Resolution 1889, which aims to strengthen implementation of Resolution 1325 and specifically addresses women's low participation and limited funding for women's needs (including physical safety and access to services) in post-conflict and peace-building periods.
2010	The Secretary-General appoints a Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict.
2010	The Human Rights Council adopts Resolution 14/12 on accelerating efforts to eliminate all forms of violence against women.
2010	The Security Council adopts Resolution 1960, reaffirming commitments to address sexual violence in conflict.
2011	The Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence is adopted as the second legally binding regional instrument on violence against women and girls.

# List of Institutional Resources

## *International Institutions*

### **United Nations**

<http://www.un.org/en>  
Secretary General's Campaign to End Violence Against Women - UNiTE  
<http://endviolence.un.org>

### **United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women**

<http://www.unwomen.org>  
Violence Against Women  
[http://www.unifem.org/gender\\_issues/violence\\_against\\_women](http://www.unifem.org/gender_issues/violence_against_women)  
Tel: USA 1 (212) 906-6400

### **United Nations Population Fund - UNFPA**

<http://www.unfpa.org>  
Includes information about its Gender Equality program  
Tel: USA +1 (212) 297-5000  
E-mail: [hq@unfpa.org](mailto:hq@unfpa.org)

### **World Health Organization**

<http://www.who.int/en>  
Includes information about Sexual and Reproductive Health programs  
E-mail: [reproductivehealth@who.int](mailto:reproductivehealth@who.int)  
Tel: Switzerland + 41 22 791 21 11

### **Pan American Health Organization**

<http://new.paho.org>  
With links to PAHO's Gender & Health program  
Tel: USA 1 (202) 974-3000

### **Vital Voices Global Partnership**

<http://www.vitalvoices.org>  
Includes information about the Global Partnership to End Violence against Women Guide to New Strategies, in partnership with the Avon Foundation  
[http://www.avonfoundation.org/assets/vv\\_finalviolence\\_lr.pdf](http://www.avonfoundation.org/assets/vv_finalviolence_lr.pdf)  
E-mail: [info@vitalvoices.org](mailto:info@vitalvoices.org)  
Tel: USA 1 (202) 861-2625

### **Women's Media Center**

<http://www.womensmediacenter.com>  
Women Under Siege Project  
<http://www.womenundersiegeproject.org>  
Email: [wmcny@womensmediacenter.com](mailto:wmcny@womensmediacenter.com)  
Tel: USA 1 (212) 563-0680

### **Global Fund for Women**

<http://www.globalfundforwomen.org>  
Tel: USA (415) 248-4800; (212) 742-8978

## *Latin American and Caribbean-Based Institutions*

### **ARGENTINA**

#### **Corte Suprema de Justicia – Oficina de**

#### **Violencia Doméstica**

<http://www.csjn.gov.ar/ovd/ovdhome.jsp>  
Tel: 4370-4600 internos 4510 al 4514  
E-mail: [ovd@csjn.gov.ar](mailto:ovd@csjn.gov.ar)

#### **Asociación Argentina de Prevención de la Violencia Familiar**

<http://www.aapvf.com.ar>  
Tel: 5300-400 int.: 76633

**Mujeres en Desigualdad: Guía de asistencia a víctimas de violencia y/o trata**  
[www.mujeresenigualdad.org.ar/pdf/Guia.pdf](http://www.mujeresenigualdad.org.ar/pdf/Guia.pdf)

### **BRAZIL**

#### **Conselho Nacional dos Direitos da Mulher - CNDM**

<http://www.spm.gov.br/conselho>

#### **Rede Intersetorial de Serviços de**

**Atendimento as Vítimas de Violência Sexual**  
<http://www.ess.ufrj.br/prevencaoviolenaciasexual>

#### **Delegancias Especializado no Atendimento a Mulher**

<http://www.brasil.gov.br/linhadotempo/epocas/1985/delegacia-de-atendimento-especializado-a-mulher>

#### **Defensorias Públicas e Juizados Especiais de Violência Doméstica e Familiar contra a Mulher**

<http://estoucontigo.mulheres-samurais.com.br>

#### **Juizado da Violência Doméstica e Familiar contra a Mulher**

<http://www.tjrj.jus.br/institucional/comissoes/cojem>

### **COLOMBIA**

#### **Instituto Colombiano de Bienestar Familiar**

<http://www.icbf.gov.co>  
National toll-free line ICBF: (57 1) 018000 91 80 80  
Toll-free line to prevent sexual abuse: (57 1) 018000 11 24 40

#### **Comisarias de Familia**

<http://www.paginasamarillas.com.co/busqueda/comisarias+de+familia>  
Comisarias en línea  
<http://www.integracionsocial.gov.co>

#### **Defensoría Delegada para los Derechos de la Niñez, Juventud y las Mujeres**

[http://www.defensoria.org.co/red/index.php?\\_item=040301&\\_secc=04&cts=1](http://www.defensoria.org.co/red/index.php?_item=040301&_secc=04&cts=1)  
Tel: (57 1) 3147300

#### **Casa de la Mujer**

<http://www.casamujer.org>  
Tels: (57 1) 2218785 – 2229176

### **DOMINICAN REPUBLIC**

#### **Comisión Nacional de Prevención y Lucha contra la Violencia Intrafamiliar**

**Observatorio de Justicia y Género**  
<http://www.observatoriojusticiaygenero.gob.do>

#### **Corte Suprema de Justicia**

#### **Dirección de Familia, Niñez, Adolescencia y Género (DIFNAG)**

Tel: (809) 686-2300  
E-mail: [difnag@suprema.gov.do](mailto:difnag@suprema.gov.do)  
<http://fiscaliadn.gob.do>  
Tel: 809-221-6400  
Tel: Santo Domingo 1 (809) 687-0098  
E-mail: [Censel@codetel.net.do](mailto:Censel@codetel.net.do)  
<https://www.facebook.com/pages/Centro-Juridico-para-la-Mujer/123375007743979>  
Tel: 1 809-587-7578

### **HAITI**

#### **Ministère de la Condition Féminine et des Droits des Femmes**

<http://www.haitivisions.com/mcfd>  
Tel: (509) 224-962 / 224-969 509-224-7574  
E-mail: [Contact@mcfd.gouv.ht](mailto:Contact@mcfd.gouv.ht)

#### **Komisyon Fanm Viktim pou Viktim - The Commission of Women Victims**

<https://www.facebook.com/pages/KOFAVIV-Komisyon-Fanm-Viktim-pou-Viktim-The-Commission-of-Women-Victims-f/103953636302552>

#### **Solidarité Fanm Ayisyen (Haitian Women in Solidarity)**

[www.oxfamsol.be/fr/Solidarite-Fanm-Ayisyen-SOFA.html](http://www.oxfamsol.be/fr/Solidarite-Fanm-Ayisyen-SOFA.html)  
Tel: (509) 245 44 60, E-mail: [sofa@hainet.net](mailto:sofa@hainet.net)  
Haitian Women's Network  
<http://haitianwomennetwork.org>  
E-mail: [admin@womennetwork.org](mailto:admin@womennetwork.org)

### **MEXICO**

#### **Directorio de Instituciones que Ofrecen**

#### **Ayuda en Situaciones de Violencia Intrafamiliar**

<http://www.escenariosdepaz.org.mx/files/Directorio.pdf>

#### **Corporación Nacional para Prevenir y Erradicar la Violencia Contra Las Mujeres**

<http://www.conavim.gob.mx>  
Tel: Mexico DF, 01 800 842 8462

#### **Asociación Mexicana Contra la Violencia**

#### **Hacia las Mujeres**

Tel: 01 (55) 5515 1756, fax: 01 (55) 5276 0085  
E-mail: [covac@laneta.apc.org](mailto:covac@laneta.apc.org)

#### **Instituto de las Mujeres del Distrito Federal**

Tel. 01 (55) 55 12 72 62  
E-mail: [inmujeresdf0610@hotmail.com](mailto:inmujeresdf0610@hotmail.com)

### **NICARAGUA**

#### **Instituto Nicaraguense de la Mujer**

<http://www.inim.gob.ni>  
E-mail: [sandra.cedeno@inim.gob.ni](mailto:sandra.cedeno@inim.gob.ni)  
Tel: (505)2278-0058 - (505)22782-523

#### **Defensoría Pública de Nicaragua**

<http://www.defensoria.poderjudicial.gob.ni>  
Tel: (505) 226-50017

#### **Comisarias de la Mujer y la Niñez**

<http://www.policia.gob.ni/tel-comi.html>  
E-mail: [comisaradelamujer@policia.gob.ni](mailto:comisaradelamujer@policia.gob.ni)  
Tel: (225)14744- (225) 94119

#### **Movimiento Autónomo de Mujeres**

<http://www.movimientoautonomodemujeres.org>  
Tel: (505) - 2278 7001

#### **Red de Mujeres Contra la Violencia**

<http://www.reddemujerescontralaviolencia.org.ni>

#### **Portal Víctimas Maltrato Abuso**

#### **Hostigamiento Sexual**

<http://victimasportal.org>

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## WHO?

**The Miami Consortium for Latin American and Caribbean Studies** is a dynamic partnership between the Latin American and Caribbean Center (LACC) at Florida International University (FIU) and the Center for Latin American Studies (CLAS) at the University of Miami (UM). Designated as a U.S. Department of Education National Resource Center on Latin America, the Miami Consortium for Latin American and Caribbean Studies is recognized as one of the nation's top institutions for the study of Latin America and the Caribbean.

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From its incomparable location in Miami, the Miami Consortium for Latin American and Caribbean Studies creates unique and innovative opportunities for South Florida's leading universities and the communities they serve.

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Built on more than 25 years of UM and FIU faculty, student and community collaboration, the Miami Consortium for Latin American and Caribbean Studies reaffirms South Florida as THE hub for political, commercial, cultural, and scholarly exchange between the U.S. and its neighbors to the South, and strategically positions Miami at the center of a broader global dialogue that connects the rest of the world to Latin America and the Caribbean.

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NEW YORK  
212.883.1300

SAN FRANCISCO  
415.986.1088

SÃO PAULO  
+55.11.3045.3080

SCOTTSDALE  
480.305.2110

WARSAW  
+48.22.223.61.00

WASHINGTON, D.C.  
202.216.9307

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